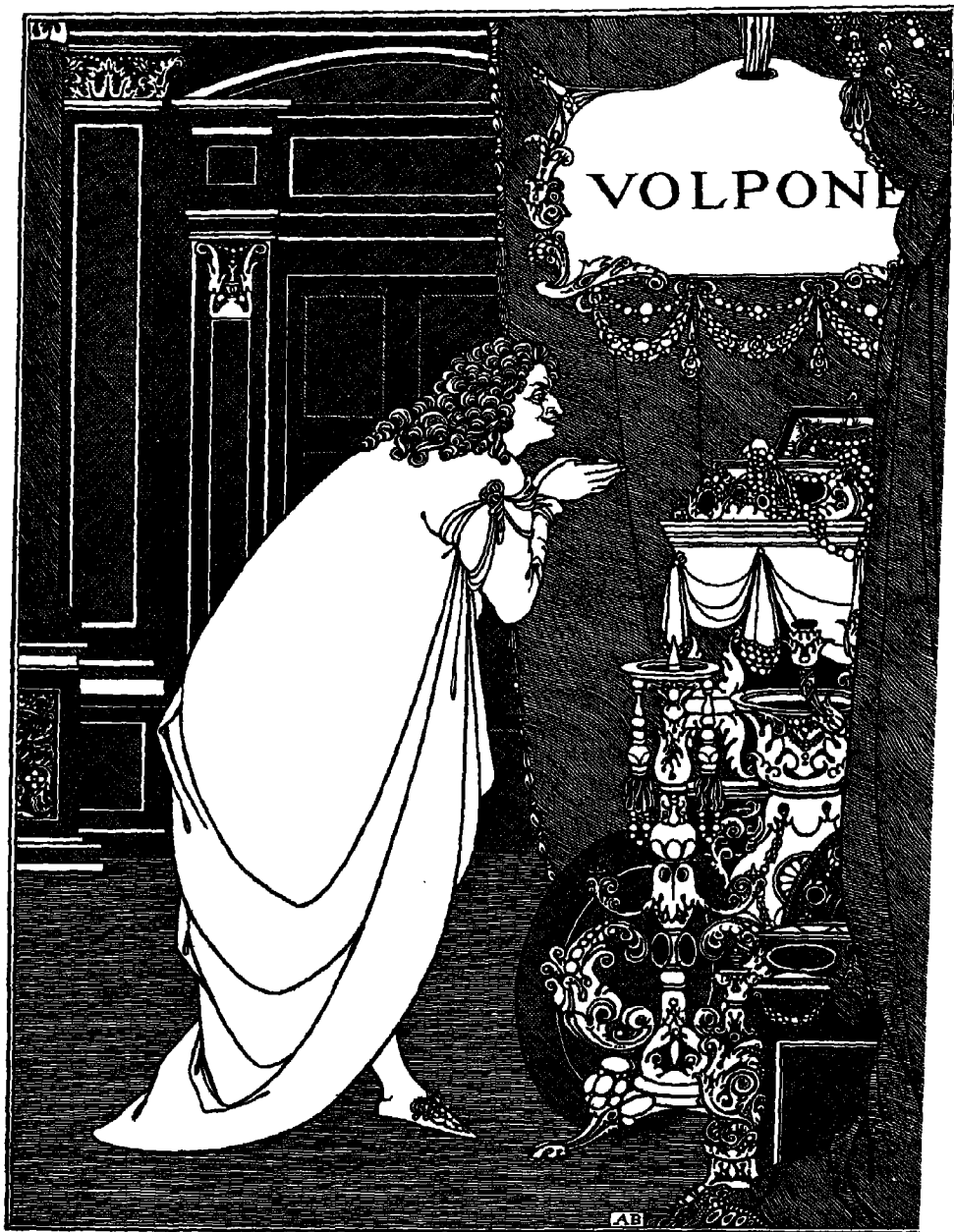


BEN IONSON
HIS
VOLPONE: OR THE FOXE

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BEN IONSON
HIS
VOLPONE: OR THE FOXE

A NEW EDITION

WITH A CRITICAL ESSAY ON THE AUTHOR BY VINCENT O'SULLIVAN
AND A FRONTISPIECE FIVE INITIAL LETTERS AND A COVER
DESIGN ILLUSTRATIVE AND DECORATIVE BY

AUBREY BEARDSLEY

TOGETHER WITH AN EULOGY OF THE ARTIST BY ROBERT ROSS

Simul et jocunda et idonea dicere vitae



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THIS EDITION OF BEN IONSON'S FAMOUS PLAY
"VOLPONE" IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY THE
PUBLISHERS TO THE MOTHER OF THE GIFTED ARTIST
WHOSE WORK, HAD HE LIVED TO COMPLETE THE
SERIES OF TWENTY-FOUR DRAWINGS IN COURSE OF
PREPARATION, WOULD HAVE SO ENRICHED IT.

THE DRAWINGS

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| COVER DESIGN | PAGE i |
| FRONTISPIECE | vi |
| VIGNETTE TO THE ARGUMENT | 19 |
| VIGNETTE TO ACT 1 | 21 |
| VIGNETTE TO ACT 2 | 55 |
| VIGNETTE TO ACT 3 | 83 |
| VIGNETTE TO ACT 4 | 116 |
| VIGNETTE TO ACT 5 | 147 |

BEN JONSON

1574-1637.

✓ "In whom with Nature Study claimed a part,
Yet who unto himself owed all his art;
Here lies Ben Jonson: every age will look
With sorrow here, with wonder on his book."
—*Cleveland's Epitaph on Jonson.*

I.

HAZLITT, in the notice of Kean's representation of "Every Man in His Humour," which was printed in the *Examiner* newspaper in 1816, has this to say of Jonson: "It has been observed of Ben Jonson, that he painted not so much human nature as temporary manners, not the characters of men, but their *humours*; which, becoming obsolete, and being in themselves altogether arbitrary and fantastical, have become unintelligible and uninteresting." If this be so, and if his characters, who make so pleasant a company in a library, no longer hold the stage as the characters of Shakespeare and Molière hold it, a sufficient cause may be found in the fact that Jonson was not himself a player, and that his interest in the drama, as such, was in consequence but half-hearted. Indeed, he does not hesitate to express his contempt for actors; and so in his introduction to one of his plays we find him declaring: "It was never acted, but most negligently played by some, the King's servants, and more squeamishly beheld and censured by others, the King's subjects"; and *Cokes'* speech about the "great players" in the fifth act of "*Bartholmew Fayre*," is disparaging enough, and is so curiously modern that it might be made to-day. This brings us at once to a close sympathy with Jonson. He probably hated the stage, and gave voice to his hatred whenever he had the chance. He wrote plays, because the drama was the only means of expression, in his day, for the man who wished to pourtray the absurdity and baseness, the vulgarity and obscenity of the human character. Had he lived in our time, or in the time of Fielding, he would certainly have been a novelist, and a

THE FOXE

very great one. The demands of the drama, the entrances and exits and asides, must have pressed upon him heavily: five acts always hampered him: he either had not room to say enough, or he had to say too much. His was a self-conscious art; and this kind of art cannot be fully developed—nay! must be very imperfectly developed in the drama. Hence it is that we find so many errors of taste in Jonson's plays—errors, I mean, from the dramatic point of view. His constant intrusion of himself on the audience, his pedantry, his long Latin sentences, his scraps of occult lore, the ill-concealed desire to talk about himself, to be himself more forward—all these, which might be delightful in a novel, only serve to hinder the action of a play. Jonson gave little thought to the action of a play; he cared nothing about it. "In 'Every Man in His Humour,'" says Schlegel in his lecture on Jonson, "the action is extremely feeble and insignificant. In the following, 'Every Man Out of His Humour,' he has gone still farther astray, in seeking the comick effect merely in characatured traits without any interest of situation: it is a rhapsody of ludicrous scenes without connection and progress." Well! the reason is, as has been said, that Jonson was cabined by the arbitrary forms of the drama; he wanted more liberty and air. He has always a good story to tell, a story full of interest and irony which dominates the reader till the very end; but he does not present it dramatically. He presents it rather by the humours and pretensions of his characters, and becomes so engaged with a scene that he very often forgets that a scene is but a part of an act. There is no reason why some of his plays should end where they do, save that the end of the fifth act is come, and the curtain must go down: thus there is in *Clerimont's* remark about the "Knights reformadoes," in the last act of "The Silent Woman," matter for five more acts of excellent comedy, and "The Alchemist" abruptly concludes at a most entertaining point, when *Subtle* and *Dol Common*, mad with rage, are craving for revenge upon the audacious and peremptory *Face*—a revenge which, we may be sure, Jonson would have been delighted to have given them, had he not been restricted by the canons of the stage. Further, his indifference to the details of stagework is shown by the fact that the terminations of his acts are sometimes singularly weak, even for an age when the "strong curtain" was not a fashion. As an instance of this may be cited the second act of "Sejanus"; and another, to which you can easily turn, is the end of the second act of "Volpone."

THE FOXE

Jonson, as a rule (I say as a rule, because there are exceptions which will be considered hereafter)—as a rule, then, Jonson does not gather up his threads, as many an expert playwright, with no whit of Jonson's genius, could gather them up. To write what an actor calls a good play, a play that will act, a man must have something in himself of the actor. I do not mean that he must strut upon the stage, but he must fathom the characters of men by emotion as well as by external observation; he must be able to assume at will, and to really feel, the passion of the king and the cardinal, the murderer and the saint. "Players"—if I may quote Hazlitt again—"players are the only honest hypocrites. Their life is a voluntary dream, a studied madness. . . . To-day kings, to-morrow beggars, it is only when they are themselves that they are nothing." Now, when we look upon Ben Jonson's portrait, upon the intellectual head, the strong nose, the humorous sensual mouth, we can see the soldier in the army of the Netherlands, where, perhaps, —if his fellow soldiers were like those who served with Uncle Toby in Flanders — he acquired his undoubted mastery over abusive and popular language; we can see the wit, possibly somewhat truculent, of the Mermaid tavern—the man whose personal force was strong enough to gather about him a number of youthful disciples whom he called his sons; and we can even imagine that we hear him call out to the Rev. William Cartwright, that "most florid and seraphick preacher*": "My son Cartwright writes all like a man!"—these traits, I say, are to be found in Jonson's portrait, but we can discover nothing of the actor.

As his appeal, therefore, is to the intelligence rather than to the emotions, he has been somewhat neglected, and always more talked about than read. Shakespeare, on the other hand, makes a direct and profound appeal to the emotions, and as the name of Jonson inevitably suggests that of Shakespeare, comparison, often so futile and unfair, will not be out of place here. It may be stated at once that Jonson is wanting in passion, the quality that Shakespeare has in all its excellent strength. Shakespeare's passion is like the deep, continuing notes of an organ; Jonson's, at the best, but the wailing of violins. Some irrational criticks, however, will have none of Jonson because he did not write like Shakespeare. They fail to perceive, these criticks, that the two men approached their art from altogether different

* Anthony Wood (1632-1695).

THE FOXE

standpoints; that some of the things that Shakespeare thought fine, Jonson must have disliked intensely; and that it is as idle to condemn Jonson for not writing like Shakespeare as it is to grumble at a racehorse because he is not a lion. Shakespeare's idea of a farcical comedy was "The Merry Wives of Windsor"; Jonson's conception of the matter was "Bartholmew Fayre." What a difference of thought and feeling is here! "My son Cartwright writes all like a man": that was what counted with Jonson—to shirk nothing, to write like a man. Shakespeare, in some of his moods, gives one the grotesque idea that he had his all-seeing eye fixed on the modern fashionable actress. Nor must it be forgotten that to many of their contemporaries Jonson's plays had a weight and importance which were altogether denied to those of Shakespeare. Webster, for instance, speaks of "the laboured and understanding works of Master Jonson; the no less worthy composures of the most worthily excellent Master Beaumont and Master Fletcher; and lastly, without wrong last to be named, the right happy and copious industry of Master Shakespeare, Master Decker, and Master Heywood." This verdict has been, justly, long set aside; still, there it stands, and may be taken as the general opinion of those who met Shakespeare and Jonson from day to day. Whether it was Jonson's parade of learning, or force of character, which impressed the men who surrounded him, it is difficult to decide; but one may hazard that Shakespeare was the quietest and dullest of all the company that resorted to the Mermaid. No man was ever less of an egoist than he; Jonson on the contrary, made of his *ego* a pillar of fire. Gifford has cleared Jonson from the charge of enmity and jealousy towards Shakespeare, and De Quincey alludes to the lines written by Jonson in memory of Shakespeare as "those generous lines which have so absurdly been taxed with faint praise"; but if we suppose for a moment the charge to be true, is it too fanciful to infer that Shakespeare, in an age when it was not uncommon to take hints for characters from living persons (Jonson had to repudiate this insinuation in his own case), found his revenge in gathering from Jonson some of the qualities which make *Falstaff*? Be that as it will, it is no light praise to say of Jonson that he was influenced not at all by Shakespeare. With a man having a style so beautiful and tantalizing working by his side, to have resisted every echo of that style, and to have invented a style and manner entirely his own, shows great and lasting strength. I have said already, but

THE FOXE

it appears to me necessary to insist, that Jonson committed the fatal mistake of bestrewing his comedies with Latin sentences and recondite lore. Could any mistake be more fatal than to fling such things at the ears of the groundlings, and at people who came to the theatre for their pleasure? Well as Jonson understood the human kind—how admirable and how closely observed is the young squire *Cokes*!—his egoism, his desire to shine and bewilder, overcame his judgment. Notwithstanding Milton's lines—

“Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
Warble his native woodnotes wild”

—it is evident that Jonson put on his “learned sock” too often. Shakespeare's good taste, or his inferior scholastick education, saved him from such a blunder; but setting that aside, it is not easy to perceive in what respect, save that of delicacy—which we find to be but a spinster's qualification when we consider the bluntness and mode of the seventeenth century—most of the comedies of Shakespeare are greater than those of Jonson. The comedies, be it noted; for Jonson was hardly on speaking terms with the tragick muse. He could never have composed that marvellous love-poem bathed in the mystick light of the Italian moon, “*Romeo and Juliet*”; he could neither have composed the thunderous cadences of “*Lear*,” nor “*Othello*,” that funeral march down to bitter death. The philosophy of “*Hamlet*” was quite out of his reach. But then, on the other side, “*Volpone*” and “*The Alchemist*” were beyond Shakespeare. “He is loth to make nature afraid in his plays,” declared Jonson, speaking of himself, “like those that beget tales, tempests, and such like drolleries, to mix his head with other men's heels.” He had not generally Shakespeare's matchless poetick style to cast a glamour over everything he touched; but he has often written lines which are worthy to stand beside any lines of Shakespeare's, except the very greatest. Here is an instance:—

“See, behold,
What thou art queen of; not in expectation,
As I feed others: but possessed and crowned.
See, here, a rope of pearl; and each more orient
Than the brave Ægyptian queen caroused:
Dissolve and drink them. See, a carbuncle,

THE FOXE

May put out both the eyes of our Saint Mark;
A diamond would have bought Lollia Paulina,
When she came in like star-light, hid with jewels,
That were the spoils of provinces, take these
And wear, and lose them."

This is from a comedy—a form of art in which Jonson was always at his best. In tragedy, the importance of the subject-matter seemed to depress him; and the long speech of *Petreibus*, in the closing scene of "Catiline, his Conspiracy," which some critics have praised, strikes us now as merely rhetorical and turgid. He had not Shakespeare's art of making his grand characters talk in the grand manner and yet remain natural; but the talk of his comedy characters is in most places more natural than that of Shakespeare's. Moreover, in the whole range of his comedy productions, you shall find no character so stupid and irritating as some of Shakespeare's Fools. The watchmen, *Bristle* and *Haggise*, seem to me better than *Dogberry*; and this is only one example of the way in which Jonson's minute observation and notation of character, to the exclusion of all else, helped him and stood to him. So far did he carry this, that, were he living to-day, some might even accuse him of being under "the tyranny of the document." Shakespeare was constantly engaged in enforcing, either directly or indirectly, some great moral law, and the dire consequences which spring from a violation of that law; Jonson, in this matter, clung to the formula that what people least understand, they explain. Jonson seldom preaches: he is uneasy in the pulpit. No play could be more unmoral than "Bartholmew Fayre," in which whores and bullies, horse-courers and cutpurses, gamblers and indiscreet married ladies, after committing various misdeeds, are all at the end invited home to supper by *Overdoo*, a Justice of the Peace. In no part of Jonson's work does he lay himself open to the objection, which Lamb made against Decker's play "The Honest Whore," of dwelling with relish upon the details of vice for the purpose of making vice odious. Defoe sometimes does just that; but never Jonson.

His command of the language of the people was extraordinary, and in this he was far ahead of any writer of his time. In the quarrel between *Face*, *Subtle*, and *Dol Common*, in the opening scene of "The Alchemist," he shews this command with all his strength, and there it develops into more than a mere command of popular language, and becomes an amazing control

THE FOXE

of English speech, an astonishing power over words. When *Face* has finished, we think the last word has been said; when *Subtle* concludes we change our minds; but *Dol's* harangue leaves us stunned and confounded, unable to hear more, if there were any more to say. Again, the curse pronounced in an Orange lodge, upon those who refuse to drink to the memory of "the good King William" seems about as much as we can stand in that line; but it becomes the babble of the nursery when placed beside the curses heaped by *Morose* and *True-wit* upon *Cutberd* the barber in "The Silent Woman." And let it be remembered that to this mastery of language was added the faculty of making his characters live and move. There are no wooden dolls in Jonson's gallery: his *dramatis personæ* (I am always speaking of his comedies) stand up and walk. In this faculty I do not know that he has been excelled by any other writer—certainly by no other writer in dramatick form. Molière may be suggested; but a comparison with Molière is obviously to be deprecated, as the two writers deal with altogether different manners and moral codes, and they seldom touch each other. In the places where they do touch, it must be granted that the advantage lies with Molière. The "Collegiates" in "Epicoene" are as inferior to the two silly women in "Les Précieuses Ridicules," as *Mascarille* is superior to *Sir Amorous La-Foole*. In his study of the lower and criminal classes of English Society, however, which was his favourite subject, it may be asserted that Jonson is almost without a rival. Who remembers anyone else, after reading "Colonel Jack" or "Moll Flanders," but the hero or the heroine? We become so interested—and Defoe himself became so interested—in the adventures of *Moll Flanders* that the minor characters pass away like wraiths, and only affect us as they advance or retard her fortunes. But Jonson in many of his comedies presents to us a body-guard of blackguards, all perfectly disparate, with their own methods and pursuits. The only English writer who approaches him at all in this respect is Dickens. Whether Pickwick and Winkle, Silas Wegg and Squeers, Podsnap, Boffin, the Veneerings, and the rest of them, are, or are not, exact types of English society in the middle of this century, is more than I can pretend to determine: I do not think it likely: but if Dickens exaggerated, if he saw through coloured glasses, Jonson's characters have been called (notably by Schlegel) caricatures. Both were interested in the outcasts and eccentrics of society; both caught the speech of the crowd; and in this matter of

THE FOXE

speech, for reality, for illusion, for making us believe people really did talk like that, Jonson was infinitely more successful than Dickens. His *Zeal-of-the-land Busy*, in the first acts of "Bartholmew Fayre," is the direct ancestor of *Stiggins* in "Pickwick"; just as in the last act, when *Busy* denounces the puppet-shew, he becomes, with his repetitions and involved sentences, the prototype of the Hyde Park orator of the present day. In truth, Jonson contained within himself a great deal of Dickens, and not a little of Balzac. He had all Dickens's humour and quick appreciation of the absurd; and to this he added Balzac's close observation and contempt of sentimentalism. Further, the foolish "vapours" conversation in "Bartholmew Fayre"—a sweet vapour, a resolute vapour, a noisome vapour—is an irresistible reminder of the equally foolish conversation at the boarding-house table in "Le Père Goriot." And if one must drive the comparison home, one may mention that most of Jonson's good women, like most of Balzac's, are more or less unreal, and entirely tedious and unattractive.

II.

Jonson, as we have seen, was essentially a comedian—a comedian whose range extended from the broadest farce to the bitterest comedy. He was not, however, in hardly any sense, what is called a "light" comedian; but rather the greatest exponent we have ever had of the comedy of tears, or tragick-comedy. In the foregoing pages we have had glimpses of the plays upon which his reputation chiefly rests—"Volpone," "The Alchemist," "Bartholmew Fayre," "The Silent Woman"—and these are all passionate exposures of the follies and weaknesses of mankind, full of angry and biting satire. And here it will not be amiss to read Fletcher's definition of tragick-comedy, which he gives in the preface to his "Faithful Shepherdess":—"A tragick-comedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths (which is enough to make it no tragedy): yet brings some near to it (which is enough to make it no comedy): which must be a representation of familiar people, with such kind of trouble as no life can be without; so that a god is as lawful in this as in a tragedy; and mean people as in a comedy." In this art of tragick-comedy, then, Jonson excelled; while in France, two centuries after Jonson's death, Alfred de Musset brought it to such perfection that it makes one pardon the offensiveness of most of his poems. But "Volpone" is every bit

THE FOXE

as well constructed and as pitiless as "On ne badine pas avec l'amour"; and Jonson never leaves us with the impression that Musset sometimes leaves us with—the impression, namely, of a mere dexterity of hand. Every one of Jonson's great plays is an example of learned skill and labour: we can see the elaborate care with which the scaffolding has been built up—a care so elaborate, indeed, that if one of the joints were withdrawn, the whole structure would be in danger of crashing to the ground. And if we want a cause for tears, not the feminine tears which spring at some sentimental tale, but the despairing tears which "rise in the heart" at certain phases of persecution and injustice; can we not find it everywhere in these comedies? What could be more merciless than the persecution of *Morose* by *True-wit* and his allies in "The Silent Woman"? One can imagine Schopenhauer, who, like *Morose*, hated all noise, reading that play in a perfect agony of tribulation and sympathy. Jonson, I repeat, rarely preaches: he is not the advertised moralist—in fact it is more than probable that he had no wish to be taken for a moralist; but his scourge has a sting as of fire in it for all that. In "Bartholmew Fayre," the young squire who has our good wishes throughout the piece, the swash-buckler captain, the thief, and the judge whose only wish is to be righteous, are brought to the same level by the most mordant satire; and in this play, too, Jonson gathers up his threads as easily and deftly as the most aggressive pedant in dramattick forms could desire—as easily and deftly, in a word, as he does in "Volpone."

Upon opening "Volpone" we are at first somewhat repelled when we find that the scene is laid in Venice. We prefer Jonson in England. We do not imitate the companions of pious Æneas,* when we see the land of Italy loom forth from Jonson's pages. But this is only a transient feeling. We soon discover that *Volpone*, *Mosca*, *Corvino*, and the others, are as little affected by Venice as *Captaine Bobadill*, or *Ursla*, the pig-woman. The names are there, but the atmosphere is not. "Romeo and Juliet" is part of an Italian night; *Shylock* would possibly be ill-at-ease away from the Rialto; but the scene of "The Foxe" might as well have been laid in Madrid or Edinburgh, for all the effect that Venice has on the characters. Jonson, a lover of learning, shews by his rather obsequious dedication of this play to the two Universities, that he

* Italiam primus conclamat Achates;

Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant.

—Æneid, iii. 524-5.

THE FOXE

was also a lover of places where learning is held in honour; and as "*Volpone*" was presented at Oxford and Cambridge before it was brought out in town, he may have thought that he must not offer those two "most equal sisters" anything so commonplace as a London street, and English persons. Of course, another reason is that it was a fashion of the time to place the scenes of plays in Italy. What concerns us, however, is that this matter of Venice does not hurt the play in the least; for Jonson became so interested in his characters and their affairs that he luckily forgot about what is called local colour. "*Volpone*" is, in some respects, the best play that Jonson wrote; and of all the plays he wrote in verse it is certainly the most poetical. He himself seems to have been conscious of this, for in the dedication he calls it a poem, not a comedy. The one fault in the work—if it can properly be called a fault—is that *Mosca*, the parasite, somewhat overshadows *Volpone*. The Fox's ruse of feigning coma, and ultimately death, keeps him a little in the background. "There be that can pack the cards, and yet cannot play well," says Bacon in his Essay on Cunning. In this case *Volpone* packs the cards very adroitly, but *Mosca* does the playing; and in the nature of things the spectators must see more of the playing than of the secret knavery. But *Mosca* himself is so admirable a character, so amusing in his villainies, that we cannot have enough of him. He is a type of the confidential servant who becomes indispensable, and presumes upon the fact. As the play goes on, his arms grow even closer around *Volpone's* neck, till at length *the Fox* becomes like Sinbad the sailor when indorsed with the old man of the sea. And when, at the end, all the trickery is exposed in the Senate-House, and sentence is pronounced upon the malefactors, could anything be more truly and grandly dramatick, without any touch of melodrama, than *Volpone's* last sneer—so in keeping with his character!—as much at himself as at his judges? Jonson is too fine an artist to permit us any reaction of pity: the unfortunate *Fox*, resolute and daring to the last, is carried off "to lie in prison, cramp't with irons," where for many a year he can meditate on his misdeeds, and on that day which shall be the end of all years, when—as he doubtless believes—every sin must face the light; and we will suppose him murmuring sometimes to his chains:—

Quid sum, miser, tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Cum vix justus sit securus?

THE FOXE

That Jonson, besides being the writer of the extraordinary and well-nigh matchless plays which have been considered here, was also a great lyric poet is unquestionable, and, I think, unquestioned. Who that has read the celebrated "Drink to me only with thine eyes," and the poem which begins "Still to be neat, still to be drest," can doubt it? Versatility has become a great word in our day, and is often used as though it meant a great thing; but in Jonson's case we need be at no pains to avoid it. If a man who can pass from the business of *Face* and *Subtle* to the wiles of *Volpone*, and from *Volpone* to lines like these:—

"Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that Love's world compriseth;
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As Love's star when it riseth!
Do but mark her forehead, smother
Than words that soothe her!
And from her arch'd brow such a grace
Sheds itself through the face,
As alone there triumphs to the life,
All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife!"

—if such a man, I say, is not to be called versatile, then no one that ever lived was versatile. Jonson's lyrics will endure till the last leaf is swept from the tree of letters, and poetry lies a dead thing in the sight of men.

Here, having brought to an end what I have to say of Jonson, let me recapitulate some of the chief grounds upon which he bases—and justly bases—his claim to an honoured immortality: he is then a dramatist in the large sense of the word; an acute observer and spirited reporter of character and emotion; a vivid painter of human life and passion; a great humourist, a great poet, and—if you will—a great novelist. Over the grave of every man whose work has delighted or encouraged us, we are inclined to breathe a kindly *Requiescat*; how urgent, therefore, and how faithful must be our prayer for Jonson!—that his sleep may be as profound as it is long, and untroubled by those dreams which, as some have fancied, haunt the slumbers of the dead—for Jonson, who has led us by the hand through so many scenes teeming with vivacity and verisimilitude. Of course, I do not assert that he is a writer who can soothe every hour: there are some moods—moods of sorrow and dejection—when a play of his would have the effect of a blow on the face. But when the day grows gray on the windows, and the shadows of evening

THE FOXE

linger on the hearth, when we are tired of the fever and fret of the world, and heartily sick of the arid wastes of latter-day literature, and of "problems," the solution of which would be zero, were they worth the squalid process of solving, with what relief do we hail the swaggering entrance of *Captaine Bobadill*, and hasten to arrange for *Lady Would-bee* and *Win Little-wit* the most comfortable chairs in the room!

VINCENT O'SULLIVAN.

February, 1898.

THE EULOGY OF AUBREY BEARDSLEY

AUBREY BEARDSLEY was born on August 21st, 1872, at Brighton. He was a quiet, reserved child, caring little for lessons, though from an early age he shewed an aptitude for drawing. He began his education at a Kindergarten. He was seven years old when the first symptoms of delicacy appeared, and he was sent to a preparatory school at Hurstpierpoint, where he was remarkable for his courage and extreme reserve. Threatened with tuberculosis, he was moved for his health to Epsom in 1881. In March, 1883, his family settled in London, and Beardsley made his first public appearance as an infant musical phenomenon, playing at concerts in company with his sister. He had a great knowledge of music, and always spoke dogmatically on a subject, the only one, he used to say, of which he knew anything. He became attracted at this time by Miss Kate Greenaway's picture books, and started illuminating menus and invitation cards with coloured chalks, making by this means quite considerable sums for a child.

In August, 1884, he and his sister were sent back to Brighton, where they resided with an old aunt. Their lives were lonely, and Beardsley developed a taste for reading of a rather serious kind—the histories of Freeman and Greene being his favourite works. He could not remain a student without creating, so he started a history of the Armada. In November of the same year he was sent to the Brighton Grammar School as a day boy, becoming a boarder in January, 1885. He was a great favourite with Mr. King, the house-master, who encouraged his tastes for reading and drawing by giving him the use of a sitting-room and the run of a library. This was one of the first pieces of luck that attended Beardsley throughout life. The head-master, Mr. Marshall, I am told, would hold him up as an example to the other boys, on account of his industry. His caricatures of the

THE FOXE

masters were fully appreciated by them, a rare occurrence in the lives of artists. He cultivated besides a talent for acting, and would often perform before large audiences at that Pavilion immortalized by Thackeray and Max Beerbohm. He organized weekly performances at the school, designing and illustrating the programmes. He even wrote a farce called a "Brown Study," which was played at Brighton, where it received serious attention from the dramatic critics of the town. He would purchase each volume of the Mermaid series of Elizabethan dramatists as it was issued, and with his sister gave performances during the holidays, in a spirit which those masterpieces have never received probably since the days of Shakespeare. From the record of the Brighton College Magazine, Beardsley appears to have taken a leading rôle in all histrionic fêtes, and to "The Pied Piper of Hameln" he contributed some delightful and racy little sketches, the first of his drawings, I believe, that were ever reproduced.

In July, 1888, he left school, and almost immediately entered an architect's office in London. In 1889, he obtained a post in the Guardian Life and Fire Insurance. During the autumn of that year the fatal hæmorrhages commenced; for two years he gave up his amateur theatricals and did little in the way of drawing. In 1891, however, he recuperated; a belief in his own powers revived. He now commenced a whole series of illustrations to various plays, such as Marlowe's "Tamerlane," Congreve's "Way of the World," and various French works which he was able to enjoy in the original. He would often speak of the encouragement and kindness he received at this period from the Rev. Alfred Gurney, who had known his family at Brighton, and who was perhaps the earliest of his friends to realise that Beardsley possessed something more than mere cleverness or precocity.

Several people have claimed to discover Aubrey Beardsley, but I think it truer to say that he revealed himself, when proper acknowledgment has been made to Mr. Vallance, Mr. Pennell, Mr. Frederick Evans and Mr. J. M. Dent. Mr. Vallance introduced him to Mr. John Lane; and to Mr. Pennell belongs the credit of introducing Beardsley's art to the public; but to Mr. J. M. Dent is due the rare distinction of giving him practical encouragement, by commissioning the "Morte d'Arthur," long before critics had written anything about him, or any but a few friends knew of his great powers. Beardsley was too remarkable a personality to remain in obscurity. And I remember

THE FOXE

with some amusement how the editor of a well-known weekly mocked at a prophecy that the artist was a coming man who would very shortly excite discussion if not admiration. Fortunately Mr. Joseph Pennell, a distinguished artist himself, and a fearless critic, not only espoused the cause of the new draughtsman, but became a personal friend for whom Beardsley always evinced great affection, and to whom he dedicated his album of fifty drawings.

I shall never forget my first meeting with Aubrey Beardsley, on February 14th, 1892, at the rooms of Mr. Vallance, the well-known disciple and biographer of William Morris. Though prepared for an extraordinary personality, I never expected the youthful apparition which glided into the room. He was shy, nervous and self-conscious, without any of the intellectual assurance and ease so characteristic of him eighteen months later when his success was unquestioned. He brought a portfolio of his marvellous drawings, in themselves an earnest of genius, but I hardly paid any attention to them at first, so overshadowed were they by the strange and fascinating originality of their author. In two hours it was not hard to discover that Beardsley's appearance did not belie him. He was an intellectual Marcellus suddenly matured. His rather long brown hair, instead of being "ébouiffé" as the ordinary genius is expected to wear it, was brushed smoothly and flatly on his head and over part of his immensely high and narrow brow. His face even then was terribly drawn and emaciated. Except in his manner, I do not think his general appearance altered very much in spite of the ill-health and suffering, borne with such unparalleled resignation and fortitude. He had a most delightful and winning smile. He grew less shy after half-an-hour, becoming gayer and more talkative. He was full of Molière and "Manon Lescaut" at the time; he seemed disappointed that none of us was musical; but he astonished by his knowledge of Balzac an authority on the subject who was also present. He spoke much of the National Gallery and the British Museum, both of which he knew with extraordinary thoroughness. He told me he had only been once to the New Gallery, where he saw some pictures by Burne Jones, but had never been to the Royal Academy. As far as I know, he never visited the spring shows of Burlington House. He always, however, defended that institution with enthusiasm, saying he would rather be an Academician than an artist, "as it takes only one man to make an artist, but forty to make an Academician."

THE FOXE

Our next meeting was a few weeks later, when he brought me a replica of his "Joan of Arc." I was anxious to buy the first and better version, now in the possession of Mr. Frederick Evans, but he refused to part with it at the time. He seemed particularly proud of the drawing; it was the only work of this period he would allow to have any merit.

In the early summer of 1892, he visited Sir Edward Burne Jones and Mr. George Frederic Watts, receiving from the former artist cordial recognition and excellent advice which proved invaluable to him. He attributed to the same great painter the criticism that "he had learnt too much from the old masters and would benefit by the training of an art school." A few days afterwards he produced a most amusing caricature of himself being kicked down the stairs of the National Gallery by Raphael, Titian and Mantegna, whilst Michael Angelo dealt a blow on his head with a hammer. This entertaining little record, I am sorry to say, was destroyed. Beardsley was always sensible about friendly and intelligent criticism. When he reached a position enjoyed by no artist of his own age, he was swift to remedy any defect pointed out to him by artists or even by ordinary friends. I never met anyone so receptive on all subjects; he would record what Mr. Pennell or M. Puvis de Chavannes said in praise or blame of a particular drawing with equal candour and good humour. This was only one of his many amiable qualities. When he afterwards became a sort of household word and his fame, or notoriety, as his enemies called it, was established, he never changed in this respect. He made friends and remained friends with many for whom his art was totally unintelligible. Social charm triumphed over all differences. He would speak with enthusiasm about writers and artists quite out of sympathy with his own aims and aspirations. He never assumed that those to whom he was introduced either knew or admired his work. His character was brisk and virile to an extraordinary degree. He made enemies, I believe, by refusing to revolve in mutual admiration societies or to support literary and artistic cliques. With the shadow of death always over him and conscious of the brief time before him, he never gave himself up to morbid despair or useless complaints. He determined to enjoy life, and, equipped with all the curiosity and gaiety of boyhood, he caught at life's exquisite moments. There was always a very deep and sincere religious vein in his temperament, only noticeable to very intimate friends. Throughout 1892, those who, like myself, saw Beardsley constantly,

THE FOXE

enjoyed exceptional advantages in studying his character before he was known to the outside world, being given opportunities which did not recur after 1893, when he became well-known, and in 1894, when he was almost a lion in London. With all his power of grasping the essential and absorbing knowledge, he remained charmingly unsophisticated. He took people as they came, never discriminating, perhaps, sufficiently the issues of life. He was unspoiled by success, unburdened with worldly wisdom. He was generous to a fault, spending his money lavishly on his friends to an extent that became almost embarrassing.

His love and knowledge of books increased rather than diminished even after he devoted himself entirely to art. In early days he would exchange his drawings for illustrated books and critical texts of the English classics with Mr. Frederick Evans, an early and enthusiastic buyer of his work. His tastes were not narrow. Poetry, memoirs, history, short stories, biography, and essays of all kinds appealed to him; but he cared little for novels, except in French. I don't think he ever read Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot, though he enjoyed Scott during the last months of his life. He had an early predilection for Lives of the Saints. The scrap-book of sketches, now in my possession, containing drawings done prior to 1892, indicates the range and extent of his taste. There are illustrations to "Manon Lescaut," "Tartarin," "Madame Bovary," Balzac ("Le Cousin Pons," the "Contes Drôlatiques"), Racine, Shelley's "Cenci." He retained his love of the drama, and began to write a play in collaboration with Mr. Brandon Thomas. While dominated by pre-Raphaelite influences, he read with great avidity "Sidonia the Sorceress," and "The Shaving of Shagpat," a favourite book of Rossetti's, and it was with a view to illustrate Mr. Meredith's Arabian Night that he became introduced to Mr. John Lane. He read Greek and Latin authors, and often astonished scholars by his acute appreciation of their matter. He approached Dantesque mediævalism through Rossetti and, later on, at the original source. Much of his early work illustrated incidents in the "Divine Comedy." He was a fervent admirer of the "Romance of the Rose" in the original, and several mediæval French books, but he once told me that he found the "Morte d'Arthur" very long-winded.

For one so romantic in the expression of his art, I should say his taste was severely classic, in distinction from bizarre. He was ambitious

THE FOXE

of literary success, but any aspirations were wisely discouraged by his admirers. His writings shewed a dangerous cleverness, which on cultivation might have proved disastrous to the realization of his true genius. "Under the Hill" is a delightful experiment in a rococo style of literature, and it would be difficult to praise sufficiently the rhythm and metrical adroitness of the two poems in the "Savoy Magazine." Though I cannot speak of his musical attainments, it may be regarded as fortunate that so stupendous a genius was directed to a more permanent form of executive power.

His knowledge of life, art, and literature seemed the result of instinct rather than study; for no one has ever discovered where he found the time or opportunity for assimilating all he did. Gregarious and sociable by nature, he was amusingly secretive about his methods and times of work. Like other industrious men, he never pretended to be busy or pressed for time. He never denied his door to callers, nor refused to go anywhere on the plea of "work."

He disliked anyone being in the room when he was drawing, and hastily hid all his materials if a stranger entered the room. He would rarely exhibit an unfinished sketch, and carefully destroyed any he was not thoroughly satisfied with himself. He carried this sensitive spirit of selection and self-criticism rather far. Calling on friends who possessed primitives, he would destroy these early relics and leave a more mature and approved specimen of his art, or the *édition de luxe* of some book he had illustrated. Some of us were so annoyed that we were eventually obliged to lock up all early examples. For though friends thus victimised were endowed with a more valuable acquisition, they had a natural sentiment and affection for the unsophisticated designs of his earlier years.

His life, though many-sided and successful, was outwardly uneventful. In the early summer of 1892 he entered Professor Brown's night school at Westminster, but during the day continued his work at the Guardian Fire Insurance until August, when, by his sister's advice, he resigned his post. In December he became acquainted with Mr. Pennell, from whose encouragement and advice he reaped the fullest advantage. The enterprise of Mr. J. M. Dent had meanwhile made him independent of masters or patrons. He commenced the decorations to the "Morte d'Arthur," and ceased to attend Professor Brown's classes. In February, 1893, his drawings were first published in

THE FOXE

London in the "Pall Mall Budget," but one of the most striking of his early designs appeared in an excellent little college magazine entitled "The Bee." When "The Studio" was started under the able editorship of Mr. Gleeson White, Beardsley designed the first cover and Mr. Pennell contributed the well-known appreciation of the new artist.

Towards the end of 1893 he commenced working for Mr. John Lane, who issued his marvellous illustrations to "Salomé" in 1894. In April of the same year appeared the "Yellow Book." To the first four volumes Beardsley contributed altogether about eighteen illustrations. From a pictorial point of view this publication had no other *raison d'être* than as a vehicle for the production of Beardsley's work, though Mr. Harland, in his capacity as literary editor, revealed the presence of many new writers among us. Throughout 1894 Beardsley's health seemed to improve, and his social success was considerable. In the previous year he had been ridiculed, but now the world accepted him at Mr. Pennell's valuation. The Beardsley type became quite a fashion, and was burlesqued at many of the theatres; his name and work were on everyone's lips. He made friends with many of his contemporaries distinguished in art and literature. At the house of one of his friends he delivered a very amusing lecture on "Art" which created much discussion.

A little later Beardsley was popularly supposed to have given pictorial expression to the views and sentiments of a certain school, and his drawings were regarded as the outward artistic sign of inward literary corruption. This is not the place to discuss the invention of a mare's nest; as someone said, "Beardsley's art was neither epic, epicene nor epigrammatic." He suffered considerably by this premature attempt to classify his art. Further efforts to ridicule his work and suppress its publication were, however, among the most cheering failures of modern journalism. In 1895 he ceased to contribute to the "Yellow Book." In January, 1896, "The Savoy" was started by Mr. Leonard Smithers, who henceforth purchased and published all Beardsley's subsequent work. Failing health was the only difficulty with which he had to contend in the future. From March, 1896, when he caught a severe chill at Brussels, he became a permanent invalid. He returned to England in May, and in August went to Bournemouth, where he spent the autumn and winter.

Those who visited him at Bournemouth never expected he would live for more than a few weeks. His courage, however, never failed him, and

THE FOXE

he continued work even while suffering from lung hæmorrhage; but he expressed a hope and belief, in which he was justified, that he might be spared one more year. On March 31st, 1897, he was received into the Catholic Church. The fervour and sincerity of his religious convictions can only be realized by those who were with him constantly; though, as I have suggested before, the flippancy and careless nature of his conversation were entirely superficial: he was always strict in his religious observances. Among his intimate friends through life were clergymen and priests who have already paid tribute to the reality and sincerity of his belief.

A week after being received, Beardsley rallied again, and moved to Paris, but still required the attention and untiring devotion of his mother, to whom he was deeply attached. He never returned to England again. From time to time he was cheered by visits from Miss Mabel Beardsley, who understood her brother as few sisters have done. For some time he stayed at St. Germain, and in July, 1897, he went to Dieppe, where he seemed almost to have recovered. It was only, however, for a short time, and in the end of 1897 he was hurried to Mentone. He never left his room after January 25th following. The accounts of him which reached London prepared his friends for the end. Almost one of his last letters was to Mr. Vincent O'Sullivan, the author of the striking Introduction to "Volpone," congratulating him on his performance. Beardsley had a great knowledge and appreciation of Ben Jonson, and his admirers will experience an added pleasure in the perusal of an Essay Beardsley was the first to see and approve of.

On March 23rd, 1898, he received the last sacraments; and on the 25th, with perfect resignation, in the presence of his mother and sister, to whom he had confided messages of love and sympathy to his many friends, Aubrey Beardsley passed away.

"Come back in sleep, for in the life
Where thou art not
We find none like thee. Time and strife
And the world's lot
Move thee no more: but love at least
And reverent heart
May move thee, royal and released
Soul, as thou art."

No one could have wished him to live on in pain and suffering. I think the only great trials of his life were the periods in which he was

THE FOXE

unfitted for work. His remarkable career was not darkened by any struggle for recognition. If few artists are as great as Aubrey Beardsley, few have been so fortunate. His short life was remarkably happy, at all events during the six years he was before the public. Everything he did met with success, a success thoroughly enjoyed by him. He seemed indifferent to the coarse criticism and violent denunciation with which much of his art was hailed. I never heard of anyone of importance who disliked him personally; on the other hand, many who were hostile and prejudiced about his art ceased to attack him after meeting him. This must have been due to the magnetism and charm of his individuality, exercised quite unconsciously, for he never tried to conciliate people, or "to work the oracle," but rather gloried in shocking "the enemy," a boyish failing for which he may be forgiven.

He had considerable intellectual vanity, but it never relapsed into simple conceit. He was generous in recognizing the talent and genius of others, but was singularly perverse in some of his utterances. He said once that only four of his contemporaries in art interested him. He bore with extraordinary patience the foolish persons who calmly asserted that both in America and England other artists had anticipated the peculiarities of his style and methods. I have seen the work of these Lambert Simnells and Perkin Warbecks, and they proved, one and all, crows in peacocks' feathers. Beardsley's style, nevertheless, influenced (unfortunately, I think) many excellent artists both younger and older than himself. In France his work was accepted without question; he was always gratified by the cordiality which greeted him in a country where he was more generally understood than in his own. He has illustrious precedents in Constable and Bonnington. Italy, Austria and Germany recognized in him a master some time before his death. In England, putting aside the notoriety and sensation caused by his posters and the "Yellow Book," appreciation of his work has been confined rather to the few. He enjoyed, however, the friendship and intimacy of great numbers of people, shewing that his amiable qualities, no less than his art, received due recognition. His conversation was vehement and witty rather than humorous. He had a remarkable talent for mimicking, very rarely exercised. He loved argument, and supported theories for the sake of argument in the most convincing manner, leaving strangers with a totally wrong impression about himself, a deception to which he was much addicted. He possessed what is *called* an artificial manner, cultivated to

THE FOXE

an extent that might be mistaken for affectation. He never could sit still for very long, and he made use of gesture for emphasis. His peculiar gait has been very happily rendered in a portrait of him by Mr. Walter Sickert. For characteristic likenesses, Mr. Rothenstein's pastels and lithographs of him are amazingly faithful; he also sat to M. Blanche, the well-known French portrait painter. None of the photographs of him conveys any idea of his appearance, and the portraits by himself are tinged with caricature.

* * * * *

To estimate the art of Aubrey Beardsley is not difficult. That his drawings must excite discussion at all times is only a proof of their lasting worth. They can never be dismissed with unkindly comment, nor shelved into the limbo of art criticism which waits for many blameless and depressing productions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among artists and men of letters no less than with that great inartistic body "the art-loving public" Aubrey Beardsley's name will always call forth wonder, admiration, speculation, and contempt. It should be conceded, however, that his work cannot appeal to everyone; and that many who have the highest perception of the beautiful saw only the repulsive and unwholesome in the troubled, exotic expression of his genius. Fortunately, no reputation in art or letters rests on the verdict of majorities—it is the opinion of the exquisite few which finally triumphs. Artists and critics have already dwelt on the beauty of Aubrey Beardsley's line, which in his early work too often resolved itself into mere calligraphy; but the mature and perfect illustrations to "Salomé" and "The Rape of the Lock" shew a mastery unsurpassed by any artist in any age or country. No one ever carried a simple line to its inevitable end with such sureness and firmness of purpose. And this is one of the lessons which even an accomplished draughtsman may learn from his drawings, in any age when scraggy execution masquerades under impressionism. Aubrey Beardsley did not shirk a difficulty by leaving lines to the imagination of critics, who might enlarge on the reticence of his medium. Art cant and studio jargon do not explain his work. Owing to the happy limitation of pen, ink and pencil, no questions of brush work or other *casus belli* need be discussed in regard to him. It is really only the presence or absence of beauty in his drawing, and his wonderful powers of technique which need trouble his admirers or detractors. Nor are we

THE FOXE

confronted with any conjecture as to what Aubrey Beardsley might have done—he has left a series of achievements. While his early death has caused deep sorrow among his personal friends, there need be no sorrow for an “inheritor of unfulfilled renown.” Old age is no more a necessary complement to the realisation of genius than premature death. Within six years, after passing through all the imitative stages of probation, he produced masterpieces he might have repeated but never surpassed. His style would have changed. He was too receptive and too restless to acquiesce in a single convention.

This is hardly the place to dwell on the great strides which black and white art has made in the last twenty years. It has been called the most modern of the arts; and, indeed, the most finished drawings of the old masters were done with a view to serve as studies or designs to be transferred to canvas, metal and wood. Vittore Pisano and Gentile Bellini would hardly have dared to frame their delightful studies and offer them as *objets d'art* to the critics of their day. At all events it were safer to say, that appreciation of a drawing for itself, without relation to the book or page it was intended to adorn or destroy, is entirely modern. It is necessary to keep this in mind, because the suitability of Beardsley's work to the books he embellished was often accidental. His designs must be judged independently, as they were conceived, without any view of interpreting or even illustrating a particular author. He was too subjective to be a mere illustrator. Profoundly interested in literature for the purposes of his art, he only extracted from it whatever was suggestive as pattern; he never professed to interpret for dull people, unable to understand what they read, any more than the mediæval illuminator and carver of grotesques attempted to explain the mysteries of the Christian faith on the borders of missals and breviaries of the miserere seats in the choir. His art was, of course, intensely *literary*, to use the word hated of modern critics, but his expression of it was the legitimate literature of the artist, not the art peculiar to literature. He did not attempt, or certainly never succeeded in giving, pictorial revision to a work of literature in the sense that Blake has done for the book of Job, and Botticelli for the “Divine Comedy.” While hardly satisfying those for whom any work of art guilty of “subject” becomes worthless, this immunity from the conventions of the illustrator will secure for Beardsley a larger share of esteem among artists pure and simple than has ever fallen to William Blake, who appeals more to men of

THE FOXE

letters than to the artist or virtuoso. The uncritical profess to find many terrible meanings in Aubrey Beardsley's drawings; and he will probably never be freed from the charge of symbolism. However morbid the sentiment in some of his work, and often there was a *macabre*, an unholy insistence on the less beautiful side of human things, the cabala of the symbolists was a sealed book to him. Such things were entirely foreign to his lucid and vigorous intelligence. There is hardly a drawing of his that does not explain itself; the commentator will search in vain for any hieroglyphic or symbolic intention. The hieratic archaism of his early work misled many people, for whom pre-Raphaelitism means presupposition. Of mysticism, that stumbling-block, he had none at all. "The Initiation of a Neophyte into the Black Art" would seem to contradict such a statement. The fantasy and grotesqueness of that lurid and haunting composition have nothing in common with the childish symbolism of black magic, the follies of freemasonry, or all the fascinating nonsense to be found in the works of Eliphaz Levi. The sumptuous accessories in which he revelled had no other than a decorative intention, giving sometimes balance to a drawing, or conveying a literary suggestion necessary for its interpretation.

Artists are blamed for what they have not tried to do; or for the absence of qualities distinguishing the work of an entirely different order of intellect; for their indifference to the observations of *others*. As who should ask from Reynolds a faithful reproduction of textile fabrics; and from Carlo Crivelli the natural phenomena of nature we expect from Turner and Constable? For nature as it should be, in the works of Corot and Turner; for nature made easy, in modern English landscape; for nature without tears, in the impressionist fashion, or as popularly viewed through the camera, Aubrey Beardsley had no feeling. He was frankly indifferent to picturesque peasants, the beauties of "lovely spots," either in England or France. A devout Catholic, the ringing of the Angelus did not lure him to present mangel-wurzels in an evening haze. The treatment of nature in the larger and truer sense of the word had little attraction for him; he never tried, therefore, to represent air, atmosphere and light, as many clever modern artists have done in black and white. Claude was the only landscape painter who really interested him. Beardsley's landscape, therefore, is formal, primitive, conventional; a breath of air hardly shakes the delicate leaves of the straight poplars and willows that grow by his serpentine streams. The great cliffs,

THE FOXE

leaning down in promontories to the sea, have that unreal, architectural appearance so remarkable in the West of Cornwall, a place he had never visited. Yet his love and observation of flowers, trees and gardens are very striking in the drawings for the "Morte d'Arthur" and the "Savoy" Magazine, but it is the nature of the landscape gardener, not the landscape painter. There is some truth in the half-playful, half-unfriendly criticism, that his pictures were a form of romantic map-making. Future experts, however, may be trusted to deal with absence of chiaroscuro, values, tones and the rest. In only one of his drawings, conceived, curiously enough, in the manner of Burne-Jones (an unlikely model), is there anything approaching what is usually termed atmosphere. Eliminating, therefore, all that must not be expected from his art—mere illustration, realism, symbolism and naturalism—in what, may be asked, does his supreme achievement consist? He has decorated white sheets of paper as they have never been decorated before; whether hung on the wall, reproduced in a book, or concealed in a museum, they remain among the most precious and exquisite works of art the nineteenth century can shew, resembling the work of William Blake only in that they must be hated, misunderstood and neglected, ere they are recognized as works of a master. With more simple materials than those employed by the fathers of black and white art, Beardsley has left memorials no less wonderful than the Greek vase-paintings, so highly prized by artists and archæologists alike, but no less difficult for the uninitiated to appreciate and understand.

The astonishing fertility of his invention, and the amount of work he managed to produce, were inconceivable; yet his work never shews any sign of hurry; there is no scamping in his deft and tidy drawing. The neatness of his most elaborate designs would suggest many sketches worked over and discarded before deciding on the final form and composition. Strange to say, this was not his method. He sketched everything in pencil, at first covering the paper with apparent scrawls, constantly rubbed out and blocked in again, until the whole surface became raddled from pencil, indiarubber, and knife; over this incoherent surface he worked in Chinese ink with a gold pen, often ignoring the pencil lines, afterwards carefully removed. So every drawing was invented, built up, and completed on the same sheet of paper. And the same process was repeated even when he produced replicas. At first he was indifferent to process reproduction, but, owing to Mr. Pennell's

THE FOXE

influence, he later on always worked with that end in view, perhaps, some will think, thereby losing his independence. But he had nothing to complain of—Mr. Pennell's contention about process was never so well proved as in Beardsley's case. His experiments in colour were not always successful, two of his most delightful designs he ruined by tinting. In the posters and "Studio" lithograph, however, the crude colour is highly effective, and "Mademoiselle de Maupin" shewed he could have mastered water-colour had he chosen to do so.

A good deal has been made out of Beardsley's love of dark rooms and lamp light, but this has been grossly exaggerated. He had no great faith in north lights and studio paraphernalia, so necessary for those who use mediums other than his own. He would sometimes draw on a perfectly flat table, facing the light, which would fall directly on the paper, the blind *slightly* lowered.

The sources of Beardsley's inspiration have led critics into grievous errors. He was accused of imitating artists, some of whose work he had never seen, and of whose names he was ignorant at the time the alleged plagiarism was perpetrated—M. Félicien Rops may be mentioned as an instance. Beardsley contrived a style long before he came across any modern French illustration. He was innocent of either Salon, the Rosicrucians, and the Royal Academy alike; but his own influence on the Continent is said to be considerable. That he borrowed freely and from every imaginable master, old and new, is, of course, obvious. Eclectic is certainly applicable to him. But what he took he endowed with a fantastic and fascinating originality; to some image or accessory, familiar to anyone who has studied the old masters, he added the touch of modernity which brings them nearer to us, and reached refinements never thought of by the old masters. Imagination is the great pirate of art, and with Beardsley becomes a pretext for invention.

Prior to 1891 his drawings are interesting only for their precocity; they may be regarded, as one of his friends has said, more as a presage than a precedent, yet marvellous when you realise the short interval elapsing between their production and the masterpieces of his maturity. His first enthusiasm was for the work of the Italian primitives, distinguished "for its free and flowing line." Even at a later time, when he devoted himself to eighteenth century models and ideals, his love of Andrea Mantegna never

THE FOXE

deserted him. He always kept reproductions from Mantegna at his side, and declared that he never ceased to learn secrets from them. In the "Litany of Mary Magdalen" and the two versions of "Joan of Arc" this influence is very marked. A Botticelli phase followed, and, though quickly discarded, was reverted to at a later period. The British Museum and the National Gallery were at first his only schools of art. As a matter of course, Rossetti and Burne-Jones, but chiefly through photographs and prints, succeeded in their turn; the influence of Burne-Jones lasting longer than any other.

Fairly drugged with too much observation of old and modern masters, he entered Professor Brown's art school, where he successfully got rid of much that was superfluous. The three months' training had the most salutary effect on his art. He now took the advice attributed to Sir Edward Burne-Jones, and unlearned much of his acquired pedantry. The mere penmanship which disfigured some of his early work entirely disappeared. His handling became finer, his drawing less timid. The sketch of Molière, it may be interesting to note, belongs to this period of his art.

A few months afterwards, he commenced the "Morte d'Arthur." Suggested and intended to rival the gloomy and expensive volumes of the Kelmscott Press, it is his most popular and least satisfactory production from an artistic point of view. The borders have far more variety and invention than those in which Morris indulged with wearisome iteration; the intricate splendours of mediæval borders are more intelligently imitated or adapted, and neither slavishly copied either from Morris or the Middle Ages. The pictures, moreover, have the merit of suiting the borders. The initial- and tail-pieces are delightful in themselves, and among the most exquisite of his grotesques and embellishments. The popularity of the book was due to its lack of originality, not to its individuality. Mediævalism for the middle classes always ensures an appreciative audience. That Morris was annoyed by the sincerest form of flattery can only be explained by Beardsley's superiority at figure drawing and the versatility he showed on every border, while his decoration of the page was more plausible than any Hammersmith effort. Beardsley came to realize afterwards that Mr. Walter Crane was a more intelligent guide and more truly reminiscent of the great book decorators than ever Morris could be.

THE FOXE

The "Morte d'Arthur" may be said, for convenience, to close Aubrey Beardsley's first period; but he modified his style during the progress of the publication, and there is no unity of intention in his types or scheme of decoration. He was gravitating Japanwards. He began, however, his so-called Japanesques long before seeing any real Japanese art, except what may be found in the London shop windows on cheap trays or biscuit-boxes. He never thought seriously of borrowing from this source until some one not conversant with Oriental art insisted on the resemblance of his drawings to Kakemonos. It was quite accidental. Beardsley was really studying with great care and attention the Crivellis in the National Gallery; their superficial resemblance to Japanese work occasioned an error from which Beardsley, quick to assimilate ideas and modes of expression, took a suggestion, unconsciously and ignorantly offered, and studied genuine examples. "Raphael Sanzio" (first version) was produced prior to this incident, and "Madame Cigale's Birthday Party" immediately afterwards. His emulation of the Japanese never left him until the production of the "Savoy" Magazine. This was the only bad artistic influence which ever threatened to endanger his originality, or permanently vitiate his style. The free use of Chinese ink, together with his intellectual vitality, saved him from "succumbing to Japan," to use Mr. Pennell's excellent phrase.

A series of grotesques to decorate some rather silly anthologies produced in the same year as the "Morte d'Arthur" are marvels of ingenuity, and far more characteristic of the artist. With them he began a new period, throwing over the deliberate archaism and mediævalism, of which he began to tire. In the illustrations to "Salomé," he reached the consummation of the new convention he created for himself. Japanese art henceforth dominated him for some time, and Burne-Jones is the only old influence that clings. Before commencing "Salomé" two events contributed to give Beardsley a fresh impetus and stimulate his method of expression: a series of visits to the collection of Greek vases in the British Museum (prompted by an essay of Mr. D. S. McColl), and to the famous Peacock Room of Mr. Whistler, in Prince's Gate—one the antithesis of Japan, the other of Burne-Jones. Impressionable at all times to novel sensations, his artistic perceptions vibrated with a new and inspired enthusiasm. Critical appreciation under his pen meant creation. From the Greek vase painting he learned that drapery can be

THE FOXE

represented effectually with a few lines, disposed with economy, not by a number of unfinished scratches and superfluous shading. If the "Salomé" drawings have any fault at all, it is that the texture of the pictures suggests some other medium than pen and ink, as Mr. Walter Crane has pointed out in his other work. They are wrought rather than drawn, and might be designs for the panel of a cabinet, for Limoges or oriental enamel. "The Rape of the Lock" is, therefore, a more satisfactory example of black and white art. Beardsley's second period lasted until the fourth volume of the "Yellow Book," in which the "Wagnerites" should be mentioned as one of the finest. In 1896, at the suggestion of Mr. Smithers and other friends, he turned his attention to the eighteenth century, in the literature of which he was always deeply interested. Eisen, Moreau, Watteau, Cochin, Pietro Longhi, now became his masters. The alien art of Wagner often supplied the theme and subject. The level of excellence sustained throughout the "Savoy" Magazine is extraordinary, in view of the terrible state of his health. His unexampled precision of line never falters; and while his composition gains in simplicity, his capacity for detail has not flagged. It is, perhaps, an accident that in his most pathetic drawing, "The Death of Pierrot," his hand seems momentarily to have lost its cunning. The same year he gave us "The Rape of the Lock," deservedly regarded by artists as the consummation of his genius; and an even more astonishing set of drawings to the "Lysistrata" of Aristophanes. They are grander than the "Rape of the Lock," and larger in treatment than anything he ever attempted. Privately issued, Beardsley was able to give full rein to a Rabelaisian fantasy, which he sometimes cultivated with too great persistence. Irritated by what he considered as over-niceness in some of his critics, he seemed determined to frighten his public. There is nothing unwholesome or suggestive about the "Lysistrata" designs: they are as frank, free, and outspoken as the text. For the countrymen of Chaucer to simulate indignation about them can only be explained "because things seen are greater than things heard." A real artist, Beardsley has not burdened himself with chronology or archæology. Conceived somewhat in the spirit of the eighteenth century, the period of graceful indecency, there is here, however, an Olympian air, a statuesque beauty, only comparable to the classical antique. The illusion is enhanced by the absence of all background, giving an added touch of severity to the compositions.

THE FOXE

Eighteen hundred and ninety-six was veritably an *annus mirabilis* even for Aubrey Beardsley. The general tendency of his style remains uniform, though without sameness. He adapted his technique to the requirements of his subject. Always mindful of the essential, rejecting the needless, he now realised his genius; and it would be impossible to believe he could have surpassed the work of 1896 but for the fragments of "Volpone." From the infinite variety of the "Savoy" Magazine it is difficult to choose any of particular importance: for his elaborate manner, the first plate to "Under the Hill"; and in a simpler style, the fascinating illustration to his own poem, "The Barber"; "Ave Atque Vale" and "The Death of Pierrot" have, besides, a human interest over and above any artistic quality they possess. For the "Volpone" Beardsley again developed his style, and sought for new effects; he discarded pen and ink. The ornate, delicate initial letters, all he lived to finish, must be seen in the originals before their sumptuous qualities, their solemn melancholy dignity, their dexterous handling, can be appreciated. The use of a camel's-hair brush for the illustrations to "Mademoiselle de Maupin," one of his last works, should be noted, as he so rarely used it. Beardsley's invention never failed him, so that it is almost impossible to take a single drawing, or set of drawings, as typical of his art. Each design is rather a type of his own intellectual mood.

If the history of grotesque remains to be written, it is already illustrated by his art. A subject little understood, it belongs to the dim ways of criticism. There is no canon or school, and the artist is allowed to be wilful, untrammelled by rule or precedent. True grotesque is not the art either of primitives or decadents, but that of skilled and accomplished workmen who have reached the zenith of a peculiar convention, however confined and limited that convention may be. Byzantine art, one of our links with the East, should some day furnish us with a key to a mystery which is now obscured by symbolists and students of serpent worship. The Greeks, with their supreme sanity and unrivalled plastic sense, afford us no real examples, though their archaic art is often pressed into the category. Beardsley, who received recognition for this side of his genius, emphasised the grotesque to an extent that precluded any popularity among people who care only for the trivial and "pretty." In him it was allied to a mordant humour, a certain fescennine abstraction, offensive to many; this, however, does not excuse the use of the

THE FOXE

word eccentric, which, with "grotesque" and "picturesque," is more misapplied than any word in the English language. All great art is eccentric to the herd. The decoration on the Parthenon was so eccentric that Pheidias was put in prison. The work of Mr. Whistler and Sir Edward Burne-Jones, once derided as eccentric, is now accepted as classic. And wherever a verdict is solicited from the uneducated, all new art will be dubbed eccentric, trampled on and despised; even as the first tulip that blossomed in England was rooted out and burnt for a worthless weed by the conscientious Scotch gardener.

To compare Beardsley with any of his contemporaries would be unjust to them and to him. He belonged to no school, and can leave no legend, in the sense that Rossetti, Mr. Whistler, and Professor Legros have done; he proclaimed no theory; he left no counsel of perfection to those who came after him. In England and America a horde of depressing disciples aped his manner with a singular want of success; while admirable and painstaking artists modified their own convictions in the cause of unpopularity with fatal results. The sensuous charm of Beardsley's imagination and his mode of expression have only a superficial resemblance to the foreign masters of black and white. He continued no great tradition of the sixties; has nothing in common with the inventive genius of Mr. Charles Ricketts and his followers; nothing of the pictorial propriety that distinguishes the work of his friend, Mr. Pennell, or the homogeneous congruity of Boyd Houghton, Charles Keene, and Mr. Frederic Sandys. He made use of different styles where other men employed different mediums. Unperplexed by painting or etching or lithography, he was satisfied with the simplest of all materials, attaining therewith unapproachable executive power. Those who cavil at his flawless technique ignore the specific quality of drawing characterising every great artist. The grammar of art exists only to be violated. Its rules can be learnt by anyone. Those who have no artistic perception invariably find fault with the perspective. A great artist has, however, pointed out to the present writer weaknesses in the extremities of Beardsley's figures—the hands and feet being interruptions rather than continuations of the limbs. Occasional carelessness in this respect is certainly noticeable, and the structure of his figures is throughout capricious. It was no fault in his early work; the hands and feet in the "Joan of Arc," if crude and exaggerated, being carefully modelled. While the right hand of "Salomé," grasping the head of the Baptist, is perfectly

THE FOXE

drawn, the left is feeble, when examined closely. For sheer drawing nothing can equal the nude figure in the colophon to "Salomé." The outstretched, quivering hands of Ali Baba are intentionally rendered larger than proportion allows, to render dramatic expression, not reality. For the purpose of effect he adapted proportions, realising that perfect congruity and reality are irreconcilable. None of the figures in the dramatic "Battle of Beaux and Belles" could sit on the fallen chair in the foreground.

There is no need to disturb ourselves with hopes and fears for the estimation with which posterity will cherish his memory; art history cannot afford to overlook him; it could hardly resist the pretext of moralizing, expatiating and explaining away so considerable a factor in the book illustration of the nineties. As a mere comment on the admirations of twenty years, Beardsley is invaluable; he sums up all the delightful manias, all that is best in modern appreciation—Greek vases, Italian primitives, the "Hypnerotomachia," Chinese porcelain, Japanese Kakemonos, Renaissance friezes, old French and English furniture, rare enamels, mediæval illumination, the *débonnaire* masters of the eighteenth century, the English pre-Raphaelites. There are differences of kind in æsthetic beauty, and for Beardsley it was the marriage of arabesque to figures and objects comely or fantastic, or in themselves ugly. For hitherto the true arabesque abhorred the graven image made of artists' hands. To future draughtsmen he will have something of the value of an old master, studied for that fastidious technique which ignorant critics believed to be a trick; and collectors of his work may live to be rallied for their taste; but the wheat and the chaff contrive to exist together through the centuries.

A passing reference should be made to the Beardsley of popular delusion. A student of Callot and Hogarth, he took suggestions from the age in which he lived and from the literature of English and French contemporaries, but with no implicit acceptance of the tenets of any groups or schools which flutter the dove-cots of Fleet Street. He stood apart, independent of the shibboleths of art and literature, with the grim and sometimes mocking attention of a spectator. He revealed rather than created a feminine type, offering no solution for the problems of Providence. The strange, the true and the beautiful are equally revolting to the multitude.

Applying the epithet "original" to an art so intensely reminiscent, so ingeniously retrospective, might seem paradoxical to those unacquainted with

THE FOXE

Beardsley's more elegant achievements. His is not the originality of Corot and Whistler, with a new interpretation of nature, another scheme of art and decoration, but rather the scholarly originality of Raphael—a scholarship grounded on a thousand traditions and yet striking an entirely new note in art. In his imagination, his choice of *motif*, his love for inanimate nature, his sentiment for accessory,—rejected by many modern artists, still so necessary to the modern temper,—his curious type which quite overshadowed that of the pre-Raphaelites, the singular technical qualities at his command, Beardsley has no predecessors, no rivals. Who has ever managed to suggest such colour in masses of black deftly composed? Reference to the text is unnecessary to learn that the hair of Herodias was purple. His style was mobile, dominating or subordinate to the subject, as his genius dictated. He twisted human forms, some will think, into fantastic peculiar shapes, becoming more than romantic—antinomian. He does not appeal to experience but to expression. The tranquil trivialities of what is usually understood by the illustration of books had no meaning for him; and before any attempt is made to discriminate and interpret the spirit, the poetical sequence, the literary inspiration which undoubtedly existed throughout his work, side by side with technical experiments, his exemption from the parallels of criticism must be remembered duly.

ROBERT ROSS.

VOLPONE ; OR, THE FOXE.

TO THE
MOST NOBLE AND MOST EQUALL SISTERS,
THE TWO FAMOUS UNIVERSITIES,
FOR THEIR
LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE SHEW'N TO HIS POEME
IN THE PRESENTATION :
BEN : IONSON,
THE GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGER,
DEDICATES BOTH IT, AND HIMSELFE.

There followes an *Epistle*, if you dare venture on the length.

THE EPISTLE

NEVER (*most aequall* SISTERS) had any man a wit so presently excellent, as that it could raise it selfe; but there must come both Matter, Occasion, Commenders, and Favourers to it. If this be true, and that the fortune of all *Writers* doth daily prove it, it behoves the carefull to provide, well, toward these accidents; and, having acquir'd them, to preserve that part of reputation most tenderly, wherein the benefit of a Friend is also defended.

Hence is it, that I now render myselfe gratefull, and am studious to justifie the bounty of your act: To which, though your mere authority were satisfying, yet, it being an age, wherein *Poëtry* and the Professors of it heare so ill, on all sides, there will a reason bee look'd for in the subject. It is certaine, (nor can it with any forehead be oppos'd) that the too-much license of *Poëtasters*, in this time, hath much deform'd their *Mistresse*; that, every day their manifold, and manifest ignorance doth stick unnatural reproches upon her: But for their petulancy, it were an act of the greatest injustice, either to let the learned suffer; or so divine a *skill* (which indeed should not be attempted with uncleane hands) to fall, under the least contempt. For if men will impartially, and not à-squint, looke toward the offices, and functions of a *Poët*, they will easily conclude to themselves, the impossibility of any mans being the good *Poët*, without first being a good *Man*. He that is sayd to be able to informe *young-men* to all good disciplines, inflame *growne men* to all great vertues, keepe *old men* in their best or supreme state, or as they decline to child-hood, recover them to their first strength; that comes forth the Interpreter, and Arbiter of *Nature*, a Teacher of things divine, no less than humane, a Master in manners; and can alone (or with a few) effect the business of Man-kind. This, I take him, is no subject for *Pride*, and *Ignorance* to exercise their railing *rhétorique* upon.

But, it will here be hastily answer'd, that the *writers* of these days are other things; that, not onely their manners, but their natures are inverted;

THE FOXE

and nothing remaining with them of the dignity of *Poët*, but the abused name, which every Scribe usurpes: that now, especially in *Dramatick*, or (as they term it) *Stage-Poëtry*, nothing but Ribaldry, Profanation, Blasphemy, all License of offence to God and Man, is practisd. I dare not deny a great part of this (and am sorry, I dare not) because in some mens abortive features (and would they had never boasted the light) it is over-true: But, that all are embarqu'd in this bold adventure for Hell, is a most uncharitable thought, and, uttered, a more malicious slander. For my particular, I can (and from a most cleare conscience) affirme that I have ever trembled to thinke toward the least Prophanesne; have loathed the use of such foule, and un-washed Baudr'y, as is now made the foode of the *Scene*: And, howsoever I cannot escape, from some, the imputation of sharpnesse, but that they will say, I have taken a pride or lust to be bitter, and not my yongest Infant but hath come into the world with all his teeth; I would aske of these supercilious *Politiques*, what Nation, Society, or generall Order, or State I have provokd? What publique Person? Whether I have not (in all these) preserv'd their dignity, as mine owne person, safe? My *WORKES* are read, allow'd, (I speake of those that are intirely mine) looke into them, what broad reprooves have I usd. Where have I bin particular? where personall, except to a Mimick, Cheater, Baud or Buffon, creatures (for their insolencies) worthy to be tax'd? or to which of these so pointingly, as he might not, either ingeniously have confest, or wisely dissembled his disease? But it is not Rumour can make mē guilty, much less entitle me, to other mens crimes. I know, that nothing can be so innocently writ, or carried, but may be made obnoxious to construction; mary, whilst I beare mine innocence about me, I feare it not. Application, is now, growne a Trade with many, and there are, that professe to have a *Key* for the deciphering of every thing, but let wise and noble Persons take heed how they bee too^s credulous, or give leave to these invading Interpreters to be over-familiar with their fames, who cunningly & often, utter their owne virulent malice, under other mens simplest meanings. As for those, that will, (by faults which charity hath rak'd up, or common honesty conceal'd) make themselves a name with the Multitude, or (to drawe their rude, and beastly clappes) care not whose living faces they intrench with their petulant stiles; may they doe it, without a rivall, for me: I chuse rather to live grac'd in obscuritie, than share with them, in so preposterous a fame. Nor can I blame the wishes of those grave, and wiser *Patriotes*, who,

THE FOXE

providing the hurts these licentious spirits may do in a State, desire rather to see Fooles and Divells, and those antique reliques of Barbarisme retri'd, with all other ridiculous, and exploded follies : than behold the wounds of Private men, of Princes, and Nations. For as HORACE makes *Trebatius* speake, in these.

Sibi quisque timet, quanquam est intactus, et odit. And men may justly impute such rages, if continu'd, to the *Writer*, as his Sports. The encrease of which lust in liberty, together with present trade of the Stage, in all their misc'line *Enterludes*, what learned or liberall soule doth not already abhor? Where nothing but the garbage of the time is utter'd, & that with such impropriety of *phrase*, such plenty of *soloecismes*, such dearth of *sense*, so bold *prolepses*, so rackt *metaphors*, with brothelry able to violate the eare of a Pagan, and blasphemy, to turne the blood of a *Christian* to water. I cannot but be serious in a cause of this nature, wherein my fame, and the reputations of diverse honest, and learned are the question ; when a NAME, so full of authority, antiquity, and all great marke, is (through their insolence) become the lowest scorne of the *Age* : And those Men subject to the petulancie of every vernaculous *orator*, that were wont to be the care of *Kings*, and happiest *Monarchs*. This it is that hath not onely rap't mee to present indignation, but made mee studious, heretofore, and by all my actions, to stand off, from them ; which may most appeare in this my latest *WORKE* (which you, *most learned Arbitresses*, have seene, judg'd and to my crowne approv'd) wherein I have labour'd, for their instruction, and amendment, to reduce, not only the ancient formes, but manners of the *Scene*, the easiness, the propriety, the innocence, and last the doctrine, which is the principall end of Poesy to informe men, in the best reason of living. And though my *Catastrophe* may, in the strict rigour of *Comick Law*, meete with censure, as turning back to my promise ; I desire the learned, and charitable *critick* to have so much faith in me, to think it was done off industrie. For with what ease I could have varied it, nearer his *scale* (but that I fear to boast my owne faculty) I could here insert. But my special aim being to put the snaffe in their mouths, that crie out, we never punish vice in our *Enterludes* &c. I tooke the more liberty ; though not without some lines of example drawne even in the *Antients* themselves, the goings out of whose *Comoedies* are not always joyfull, but oftimes, the Baudes, the Servants, the Rivalls, yea and the maisters are mulcted : and fitly, it being the office of a

THE FOXE

Comick-poet to imitate justice and instruct to life, as well as puritie of language, or stirre up gentle affections. To which, upon my next opportunity toward the examining & digesting of my *notes*, I shall speake more wealthily, and pay the World a debt.

In the meantime (*most revered SISTERS*) as I have car'd to be thankfull for your affections past, and here made the understanding acquainted with some ground of your favours; let me not dispayre their continuance, to the maturing of some Worthier fruits, wherein, if my *MUSES* bee true to me, I shall raise the dispis'd head of *POETRY* againe, and stripping her out of those rotten and base ragges, wherewhich the *Times* have adulterated her forme, restore her to her primitive habite, feature and majesty, and render her worthy to be imbraced, and kist, of all the great and Maister *spirits* of our World. As for the vile, and slothfull, who never affected an act, worthy of celebration, or are so inward with their owne vicious natures, as they worthely feare her; and thinke it a high point of policie to keepe her in contempt with their declamatory and windy invectives: Shee shall, out of just rage, incite her Servants (who are *Genus irritabile*) to spout inke in their faces that shall eate farder than their marrow, into their fames; and not *CINNAMUS* the Barber, with his art, shall be able to take out the brands, but they shall live, and be read, till the Wretches die, as Things worst deserving of themselves in chiefe, and then of all mankind.

From my house in the Black-Friars this II. of February. 1607.

THE FOXE

AD UTRAMQUE ACADEMIAM,

DE BENIAMIN IONSONIO

*Hic ille est primus, qui doctum drama BRITANNIS,
GRAIORUM antiqua, et LATII monimenta Theatri,
Tanquam explorator versans, foelicibus ausis
Prebebit: magnis ceptis Gemina astra favete
Alterutrâ veteres contenti laude: Cothurnum hic,
Atque pari soccum trachbat Sol scenicus arte;
Das VOLTONE iocos, fletus SEIANE dedisti.
At si IONSONIAS mulctatas limite MYSAS
Angustâ plangent quiquam: Vos, dicite, contrâ,
O nimium miseros quibus ANGLIS ANGLICA lingua
Aut non sat nota est; aut queis (seu trans mare natis)
Haud nota omnino: Vegetet cum tempore Vates,
Mutabit patriam, fietque ipse ANGLUS APOLLO.*

E. B.

THE FOXE

Amicissimo, & Meritissimo

BEN: IONSON.

*Quod arte ausus es hic tuâ, POETA,
Si auderent hominum Deique iuris
Consulti, veteres sequi aemularierque,
O omnes saperemus ad salutem.
His sed sunt veteres araneosi;
Tam nemo veterum est sequutor, ut tu
Illos quodd sequeris novator audis.
Fac tamen quod agis; tuique primâ.
Libri Canitie induantur horâ:
Nam caris pueritia est neganda,
Nascanturque senes, oportet, illi
Libri, queis dare vis perennitatem.
Priscis, ingenium facit, laborque
Te parem; hos superes, ut & futuros,
Ex nostrâ vitiositate fumâs,
Quâ priscos superamus, & futuros.*

I. D.

THE FOXE

To my friend MR. IONSON.

Epigramme.

Ionson, to tell the world what I to thee
Am, 'tis *Friend*. Not to praise, nor usher forth
Thee, or thy Worke, as if it needed mee.
Send I these ri'mes to adde ought to thy worth,
So should I flatter my selfe, and not thine ;
For there were truth on thy side, none on mine.

To the Reader. Upon the Worke.

If thou dars't bite this FOXE, then read my ri'mes ;
Thou guilty art of some of these foule crimes :
Which, else, are neyther his, nor thine, but *Times*.

If thou dost like it, well ; it will imply
Thou lik'st with judgment, or best company :
And hee, that doth not so, doth yet enine.

The auntieul formes reduc'd, as in this age
The vices, are ; and bare-fac'd on the stage :
So boyes were taught t' abhorre seene dronkards rage.

T. R.

THE FOXE

To my deare friend, Mr. Benjamin Ionson, upon his FOXE.

*If it might stand with Iustice, to allow
The swift conversion of all follies; now,
Such is my Mercy, that I could admit
All sorts should equally approve the wit,
Of this thy even worke: whose growing fame,
Shall raise thee high, and thou it, with thy Name.
And did not Manners; and my Love command
Mee to forbear to make those understand,
Whom thou, perhaps, hast in thy wiser doome,
Long since, firmly resolv'd shall never come
To know more than they do; I would have shovne
To all the world, the Art, which thou alone
Hast taught our tongue, the rules of Time, of Place,
And other Rites, deliver'd with the grace
Of Comick stile, which onely, is farre more,
Than any English Stage hath knowne before.
But since our subtle Gallants thinke it good
To like of nought, that may be understood,
Least they should be disprov'd; or have, at best,
Stomachs so raw, that nothing can digest
But what's obscene, or barks: Let us desire
They may continue, simplie, to admire
Fine Clothes, and strange words; and may live, in age,
To see themselves ill-brought upon the Stage,
And like it. Whilst thy bold, and knowing Muse
Contemnes all praise, but such as thou wouldst chuse.*

F. B.

THE FOXE

To my good friend. Mr. Ionsen.

The strange new follies of this idle age,
In strange new formes, presented on the Stage
By thy quick *Muse*, so pleas'd iudicious eyes ;
That th' once-admired antient *Comoedies*
Fashions, like clothes growne out of fashion, lay
Lock'd up from use : untill thy FOXE birth-day,
In an old garbe, shew'd so much art, and wit,
As they the laurell gave to thee, and it.

D. D.

To the ingenious Poet.

The FOXE that eas'd thee of thy modest feares,
And earth'd himselfe, alive, into our eares,
Will so, in death, commend his worth, and thee
As neyther can, by praises, mended bee :
Tis friendly folly, thou maist thanke, and blame,
To praise a booke, whose forehead beares thy *Name*.
Then IONSON onely this (among the rest)
I, ever, have observ'd, thy last work's best :
Pase, gently on ; thy worth, yet higher, raise ;
Till thou write best, as well as the best *PLAYES*

I. C.

THE FOXE

To his deare Friend, Benjamin Ionson.

his

VOLPONE.

*Come, yet, more forth, VOLPONE, and thy chase
Performe to al length, for thy breath wil serve thee;
The Usurer shal, never, weare thy case:
Men do not hunt to kill, but to preserve thee.
Before the best houndes, thou dost, still, but play;
And, for our whelpes, alasse, they yelp in vaine:
Thou hast no earth; thou hunt'st the Milke-whiteway;
And, through th' Elisian feilds, dost make thy traine.
And as the Symbole of lifes Guard, the Hare,
That, sleeping, wakes; and for her feare was saf't.
So, thou shalt be advanc'd, and make a starre,
Pole to all witts, beleev'd in, for thy craft.
In which the Scenes, both Marke, and Mystery
Is hit, and sounded, to please best, and worst;
To all which, since thou mak'st so sweete a cry,
Take all thy best fare, and be nothing curst.*

G. C.

THE FOXE

To my worthily-esteemed Mr. Ben Ionson.

VOLPONE now is dead indeed, and lies
Exposed to the censure of all eies,
And mouth's; now he hath run his traine, and show'n
His subtile body, where he best was knowne;
In both *Minerva's Citties*: he doth yeeld
His well-form'd-limbs upon this open field.
Who, if they now appeare so faire in fight,
How did they, when they were endew'd with spright
Of Action? Yet in thy praise let this be read,
The *FOXE* will live, when all his hounds be dead.

E. S.

*To the true Mr. in his
Art, B. Ionson.*

*Forgive thy friends; they would, but cannot praise
Inough' the wit, art, language of thy PLAYES:
Forgive thy foes; they will not praise thee. Why?
Thy fate hath thought it best, they should envy.
Faith for thy FOXES sake, forgive then those
Who are not worthy to be friends, nor foes.
Or, for their owne brave sake, let them be still
Foolles at thy mercy, and like what they will.*

I. F.

The Persons of the Comoedye

VOLPONE, *a Magnifico.*

MOSCA, *his Parasite.*

VOLTORE, *an Advocate.*

CORBACCIO, *an olde Gentleman.*

CORVINO, *a Merchant.*

AVOCATORI, *4 Magistrates.*

NOTARIO, *the Register.*

NANO, *a Dwarf.*

CASTRONE, *an Eunuch.*

GREGE.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE,
a Knight.

PEREGRINE, *a Gent-Travailer.*

BONARIO, *a Yong Gentleman.*

FINE MADAME WOULD-BEE,
the Knight's Wife.

CELIA, *the Merchant's Wife.*

COMMANDADORI, *Officers.*

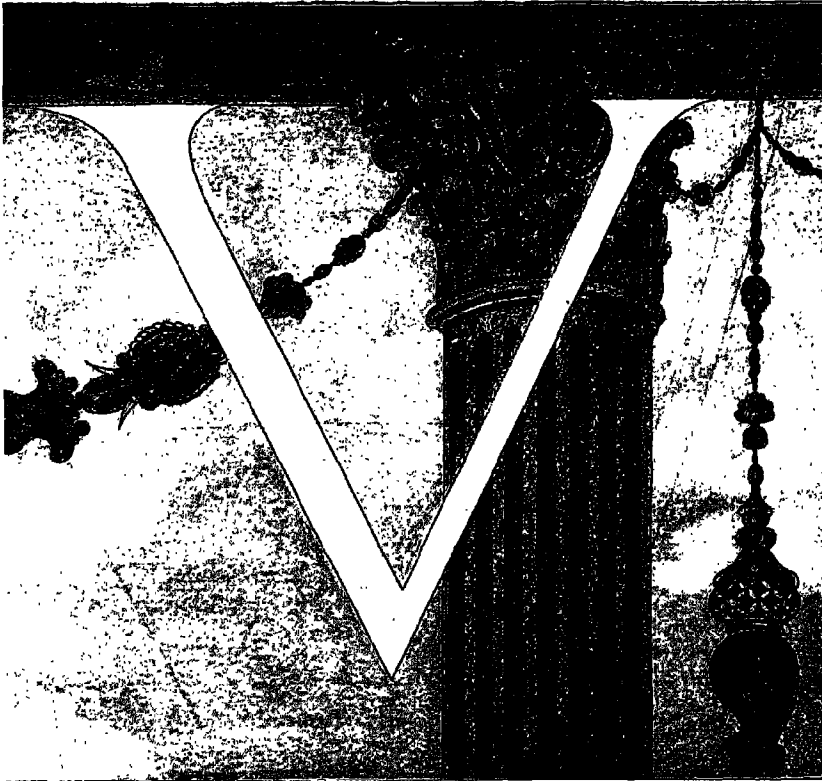
MERCATORI, *3 Merchants.*

ANDROGYNO, *a Hermaphrodite.*

SERVITORE, *a Servant.*

WOMEN 2.

THE ARGUMENT



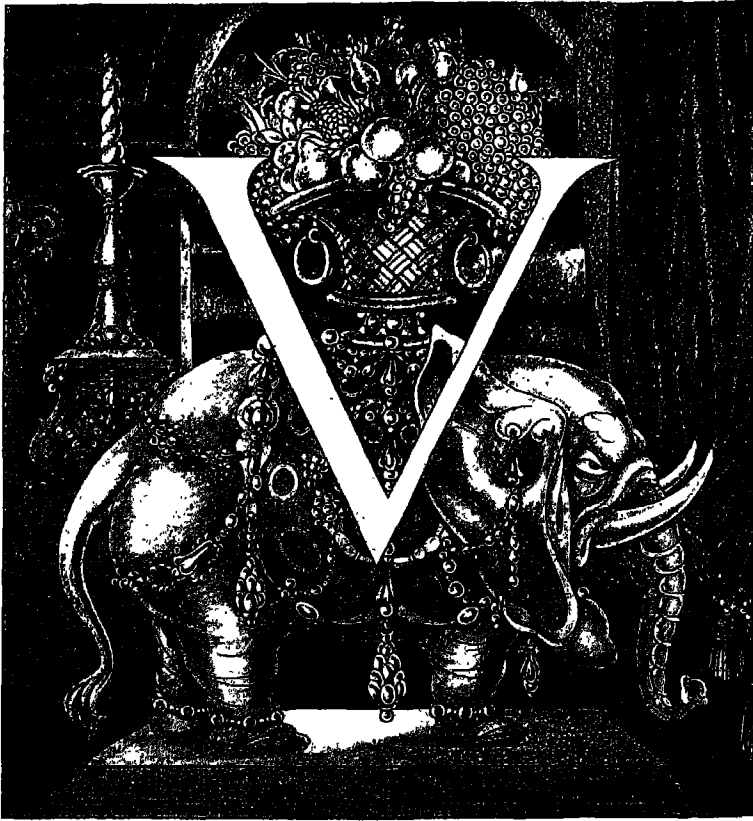
OLPONE, child-
lesse, rich,
faines sick,
despaires,
Offers his
state to hopes
of severall
heyres,
Lies languish-
ing; his
Parasite re-
ceaves
Presents of all,
assures, de-
ludes: Then
weaves
O ther crosse-
plots, which
ope' them-
selves, are
told.
New tricks
for safety,
are sought;
they thrive:
When, bold,
Each tempt's
th' other
again, and
all are sold.

THE PROLOGUE

*Now, luck God send us, and a little wit
Will serve, to make our PLAY hit ;
(According to the palates of the season)
Here is rime, not emptie of reason :
This we were bid to credit, from our Pöet,
Whose true scope, if you would knowe it,
In all his Poemës, still, hath beene this measure,
To mixe profit, with your pleasure ;
And not as some (whose throates their envie fayling)
Crie hoarsely, All he writes, is rayling :
And, when his Playes come forth, thinke they can flout them.
With saying, He was a yeare about them.
To these there needs no Lye, but this his creature,
Which was, two monthes since, no feature ;
And though he dares give them five lives to mend it,
'Tis knowne, five weekes fully pen'd it :
From his owne hand, without a Co-adjutor,
Novice, Journey-man, or Tutor.
Yet, thus much I can give you, as a token
Of his Playes worth, No egges are broken,
Nor quaking Custards with feirce teeth affrighted,
Wherewith your route are so delighted ;
Nor haies hee in a Gull, old ends reciting,
To stop gappes in his loose writing ;
With such a deale of monstrous, and forc'd action :
As might make Bethlem a faction :
Nor made he his Play, for iests stolne from each Table,
But makes jests to fit his Fable ;
And, so presents quick Comoedy, refined,
As best Criticks have designed,
The Lawes of Time, Place, Persons he observeth,
From no needefull Rule he swerveth.
All gall, and coppresse, from his inke, he drayneth,
Onelie, a little salt remaineth ;
Wherewith, hee'll rub your cheekes, till (red with laughter)
They shall looke fresh, a weeke after.*

ACT I. SCENE I.

VOLPONE. MOSCA.



OLPONE.

Good morning to
the Day; and next,
my Gold :

Open the shrine,
that I may see my
Saint,

Hayle the worlds
soule, and mine.

More glad then is
The teeming earth,
to see the longd-
for *Sunne*

Peepe through the
horns of the
Coelestiall Ram,

Am I, to view thy
splendor, dark-
ening his :

That lying here,
amongst my other
hoordes,

Shew'st like a flame, by night ; or like the Day
Strooke out of *Chaos*, when all darkenes fled
Unto the center. O thou Sonne of *Sol*,
(But brighter than thy father) let me kisse,
With adoration, thee, and every relique;
Of sacred treasure, in this blessed roome. /

THE FOXE

Well did wise *Pöets*, by thy glorious name,
Title that age, which they would have the best ;
Thou being the best of things : and far transcending
All stile of joy, in children, parents, friends,
Or any other waking dreame on earth.
Thy lookes when they to *Venus* did ascribe,
They should have giv'n her twenty thousand *Cupids* ;
Such are thy beauties, and our loves. Deare *Saint*,
Riches, the dömbe God, that giv'st all men tongues ;
That canst doe naught, and yet mak'st men doe all things ;
The price of soules ; even hell, with thee to boote,
Is made worth heaven. [Thou art vertue, fame,
Honor, and all things else. Who can get thee,
He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise,——]

MOSCA.

And what he will, Sir. Riches are in fortune |
A greater good, than wisdom is in nature.]

VOLPONE.

True, my beloved *Mosca*. Yet, I glory
More in the cunning purchasse of my wealth,
Than in the glad possession ; since I gaine
No common way : I use no trade, no venter ;
I wound no earth with plow-shares ; fat no beasts
To feede the *Shambles* ; have no mills for iron,
Oyle, corne, or men, to grinde 'hem into poulder ;
I blow no subtill glasse ; expose no shippes
To threatnings of the furrow-faced sea ;
I turne no moneys, in the publike banke,
Nor usure private.

MOSCA.

No sir, nor devoure
Soft prodigalls. You shall ha' some will swallow
A melting heire, as glibly, as your *Dutch*
Will pills of butter, and nére purge for't ;

THE FOXE

Teare forth the fathers of poore families
Out of their beds, and coffin them alive,
In some kinde, claspings prison, where their bones
May be forth-comming, when the flesh is rotten :
But your sweet nature doth abhorre these courses ;
You loathe, the widdowes, or the orphan's teares
Should washe your pavements ; or their pityous cries
Ring in your roofes, and beate the ayre for vengeance.

VOLPONE.

Right, *Mosca* ; I do loath it.

MOSCA.

And, besides, Sir,
You are not like the thresher, that doth stand
With a huge flail, watching a heape of corne,
And, hungry, dares not taste the smallest graine,
But feedes on mallowes, and such bitter herbes ;
Nor like the merchant, who hath fill'd his vaults
With *Romagnia*, and rich *Candian* wines,
Yet drinks the lees of *Lombard's* vineger :
You will not lie in straw, whilst mothes, and wormes
Feed on your sumptuous hangings, and soft bedds.
You know the use of riches, and dare give, now,
From that bright heape, to mee, your poore observer,
Or to your *Dwarfe*, or your *Hermaphrodite*,
Your *Eunuch*, or what other houshold-trifle
Your pleasure allowes maint'nance.

VOLPONE.

Hold thee, *Mosca*,
Take of my hand ; thou strik'st on truth in all :
And they are envious, terme thee *Parasite*.
Call forth my *Dwarfe*, my *Eunuch*, and my *Foole*,
And let 'hem make me sport. What should I do,
But cocker up my *Genius*, and live free
To all delights, my fortune calls me too ?

THE FOXE

I have no wife, no parent, childe, allye,
 To give my substance too; but whom I make;
 Must be my heyre: and this makes men observe me,
 This drawes newe clients, dayly, to my house,
 Women, and men, of every sexe, and age,
 That bring me presents, send me plate, coyne, jewels,
 With hope, that when I die, (which they expect
 Each greedy minute) it shall then returne
 Ten-fold upon them; whil'st some, covetous
 Above the rest, seeke to engrosse me, whole,
 And counter-worke, the one, unto the other,
 Contend in gifts, as they would seeme, in love:
 All which I suffer, playing with their hopes,
 And am content to coyne 'hem into profit,
 To looke upon their kindnesse, and take more,
 And looke on that; still, bearing them in hand,
 Letting the cherry knock against their lips,
 And, drawe it, by their mouths, and back again. How now!

ACT 1. SCENE 2.

NANO. ANDROGYNO. CASTRONE. VOLPONE. MOSCA.

*Now roome, for fresh Gamsters, who do will you to know,
 They do bring you neither Play, nor University Show;
 And therefore do intreat you, that whatsoever they rehearse,
 May not fare a whit the worse, for the false pase of the verse.
 If you wonder at this, you will wonder more, ere we passe,
 For know, here is inclos'd the soule of Pithagoras,
 That lugler divine, as hereafter shall follow;
 Which Soule (fast, and loose, Sir); came first from Apollo,
 And was breath'd into Æthalides, Mercurius his sonne,
 Where it had the gift to remember all that ever was done,
 From thence it fled forth, and made quicke transmigration
 To goldy-lockt Euphorbus, who was kill'd, in good fashion,*

THE FOXE

*At the seege of old Troy, by the Cuckold of Sparta.
Hermotimus was next (I find it, in my Chartâ),
To whom it did passe, where no sooner it was missing,
But with one Pirrhus, of Delos, it learn'd to go a-fishing:
And thence, did it enter the Sophist of Greece,
From Pithagore, she went into a beautifull peece,
Hight Aspasia, the Meretrix; and the next tosse of her
Was, againe, of a Whore, she became a Philosopher,
Crates the Cynick: (as itselſe doth relate it)
Since, Kings, Knights, and Beggars, Knaves, Lords, and
 Fooles gat it,
Besides, Oxe and Asse, Cammel, Mule, Goat, and Brock,
In all which it hath spoke, as in the Cobblers Cock.
But I come not here, to discourse of that matter,
Or his One, Two, or Three, or his great Oath, By Quater,
His Musicks, his Trigon, his golden Thigh,
Or his telling how Elements shift: but I
Would aske, how of late, thou hast suffered translation,
And shifted thy coat, in these dayes of Reformation.*

ANDROGYNO.

*Like one of the Reformed, a Foole, as you see,
Counting all old Doctrine heresie:*

NANO.

But not on thine owne forbid meates hast thou venter'd?

ANDROGYNO.

On fish, when first, a Carthusian I entered.

NANO.

Why, then thy dogmaticall Silence hath left thee?

ANDROGYNO.

Of that an obstreperous Lawyer bereft mee.

NANO.

*O wonderful change! when S^r. Lawyer forsook thee,
For Pithagore's sake, what body then tooke thee?*

THE FOXE

ANDROGYNO.

A good dull Moyle.

NANO.

*And how? by that meanes,
Thou wert brought to allow of the eating of Beanes?*

ANDROGYNO.

Yes.

NANO.

But from the Moyle, into whom didst thou pass?

ANDROGYNO.

*Into a very strange Beast, by some Writers cal'd an Asse;
By others, a precise, pure, illuminate Brother,
Of those devoure flesh, and sometimes one another:
And will drop you forth a libell, or a sanctified lie,
Betwixt every spooneful of a Nativity-Pie.*

NANO.

*Now quit thee, for Heaven, of that profanation,
And gently, report thy next transmigration.*

ANDROGYNO.

To the same that I am.

NANO.

*A Creature of delight?
And (what is more than a Foole) an Hermaphrodite?
Now, pray thee, sweete Soule, in all thy variation,
Which Body wouldst thou choose, to take up thy station?*

ANDROGYNO.

Troth, this I am in, even here would I tarry.

NANO.

'Cause here, the delight of each Sexe thou canst varie?

ANDROGYNO.

*Alas, those pleasures be stale, and forsaken;
No, 'tis your Foole, wherewith I am so taken,*

THE FOXE

*The only one Creature that I can call blessed :
For all other formes I have prov'd most distressed.*

NANO.

*Spoke true, as thou wert in Pithagoras still.
This learned opinion we celebrate will,
Fellow Eunuch (as behooves us), with all our wit, and arte,
To dignifie that, whereof ourselves are so great, and special a
part.*

VOLPONE.

Now, very, very pretty : *Mosca*, this
Was thy invention ?

MOSCA.

If it please my Patron,
Not else.

VOLPONE.

It doth good *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

Then it was, S^r.

SONG

*Fooles, they are the onely Nation
Worth men's envy, or admiration ;
Free from care, or sorrow-taking,
Themselves, and others merry making :
All they speake, or do, is sterling.
Your Foole, he is your great man's dearling,
And your Ladies sport, and pleasure ;
Tongue, and Bable are his treasure.
His very face begetteth laughter,
And he speakes truth, free from slaughter ;
He's the grace of every feast,
And, sometimes, the cheefest guest :*

THE FOXE

*Hath his trencher, and his stoole,
* When wit waites upon the fool.
O, who would not bee
Hee, hee, hee ?*"

VOLPONE.

Who's that? away, looke *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

Foole, begon,
'Tis Signior *Voltore*, the advocate,
I know him by his knock.

VOLPONE.

Fetch me my gowne,
My furies, and night-caps; say, my couch is changing :
And let him intertaine himselfe, a-while
Within i' th' gallery. Now, now, my clients
Beginne their visitation; *Vulture*, *Kite*,
Raven, and *gor-Crowe*, all my birds of prey,
That thinke me turning carcasse, now they come :
I am not for 'hem yet. How now? the newes?

MOSCA.

A peece of plate, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Of what bignesse?

MOSCA.

Huge,
Massie, and antique, with your name inscrib'd,
And armes ingraven.

VOLPONE.

Good. And not a *Foxe*
Stretch'd on the earth, with fine delusive sleights,
Mocking a gaping *Crow*? ha, *Mosca*?

* This is the Reading of the first edition of the *Workes of Ben Jonson*, 1616.
The Reading of the first edition of "*The Foxe*," 1607, has: *When wit shall waite upon
the foole.*

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Sharpe, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Give me my furies.

Why dost thou laugh so, man?

MOSCA.

I cannot choose, Sir, when I apprehend
What thoughts he has (within) now, as he walks :
That this might be the last gift, he should give ;
That this would fetch you ; if you died to-day,
And gave him all, what he should be to-morrow ;
What large returne would come of all his venters ;
How he should worship'd bee, and reverenc'd ;
Ride, with his furies, and foote-cloths ; waited on
By herds of *Fooles*, and clients ; have cleare way
Made for his moyle, as letter'd as himselfe ;
Be cald the great, and learned *Advocate* :
And then concludes, there's nought impossible.

VOLPONE.

Yes, to be learned, *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

O, no : rich
Implies it. Hood an asse, with reverend purple,
So you can hide his two ambitious cares,
And, he shall passe for a *cathedrall Doctor*.

VOLPONE.

My caps, my caps, good *Mosca*. Fetch him in.

MOSCA.

Stay, Sir ; your ointment for your eyes.

VOLPONE.

That's true ;
Dispatch, dispatch : I long to have possession
Of my newe present.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

That, and thousands more,
I hope, to see you lord of.

VOLPONE.

Thankes, kind *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

And that, when I am lost in blended dust,
And hundreds such, as I am, in succession——

VOLPONE.

Nay, that were too much, *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

You shall live,
Still, to delude these *Harpyeis*.

VOLPONE.

Loving *Mosca*,
'Tis well, my pillow now, and let him enter.
Now, my fain'd *Cough*, my *Pthisick*, and my *Goute*,
My *Apoplexie*, *Palsie* and *Catarrhe*,
Helpe, with your forced functions, this my posture,
Wherein, this three yeare, I have milk'd their hopes.
He comes; I heare him—(uh, uh, uh, uh) o.

ACT I. SCENE 3.

MOSCA. VOLTORE. VOLPONE.

You still are, what you were, Sir. Onely you,
(Of all the rest) are he commands his love:
And you do wisely to preserve it, thus,
With early visitation, and kinde notes
Of your good meaning to him, which, I know,
Cannot but come most gratefull. *Patron*, Sir.
Here's Signior *Voltore* is come——

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

What say you?

MOSCA.

S^r, Signior *Voltore* is come, this morning,
To visit you.

VOLPONE.

I thanke him.

MOSCA.

And hath brought
A peece of antique plate, bought of St. *Marke*,
With which he here presents you.

VOLPONE.

He is welcome.
Pray him, to come more often.

MOSCA.

Yes.

VOLTORE.

What saies he?

MOSCA.

He thankes you, and desires you see him often.

VOLPONE.

Mosca.

MOSCA.

My patron?

VOLPONE.

Bring him neare, where is he?
I long to feele his hand.

MOSCA.

The plate is here, S^r.

VOLTORE.

How fare you S^r?

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

I thanke you, Signior *Voltore*;
Where is the plate? mine eyes are bad.

VOLTORE.

I'm sorry
To see you still thus weake.

MOSCA.

That hee is not weaker.

VOLPONE.

You are too munificent.

VOLTORE.

No, S^r. Would to heaven,
I could as well give health to you, as that plate.

VOLPONE.

You give, S^r, what you can. I thanke you. Your love
Hath tast in this, and shall not be unanswer'd.
I pray you see me often.

VOLTORE.

Yes, I shall, S^r.

VOLPONE.

Be not far from mee.

MOSCA.

Do you observe that, S^r?

VOLPONE.

Hearken unto mee, still. It will concerne you.

MOSCA.

You are a happy man S^r, know your good.

VOLPONE.

I cannot now last long.

MOSCA.

You are his heyre, S^r.

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

Am I?

VOLPONE.

I feele mee going (uh, uh, uh, uh.)

I am sayling to my port (uh, uh, uh, uh.)

And I am glad, I am so neere my haven.

MOSCA.

Alas, kinde gentleman, well, we must all go.

VOLTORE.

But, *Mosca*,

MOSCA.

Age will conquer.

VOLTORE.

'Pray thee, heare mee.

Am I inscrib'd his heire, for certaine?

MOSCA.

Are you?

I do beseech you, S^r, you will vouchsafe

To write me, i' your family. All my hopes,

Depend upon your worship; I am lost,

Except the rising Sunne do shine on me.

VOLTORE.

It shall both shine, and warme thee, *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

S^r,

I am a man, that have not done your love

All the worst offices, here I weare your keys,

See all your coffers, and your caskets lockt,

Keepe the poore inventorie of your jewels,

Your plate, and moneyes, am your Steward, S^r.

Husband your goods here.

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

But am I sole heyre?

MOSCA.

Without a partner, Sr. Confirmde this morning ;
The waxe is warme yet, and the inke scarce dry
Upon the parchment.

VOLTORE.

Happy, happy mee !
By what good chance, sweete *Mosca*?

MOSCA.

Your desert, Sir ;
I know no second cause.

VOLTORE.

Thy modesty
Is loath to know it ; well, we shall requite it.

MOSCA.

He ever lik'd your course, Sr. That first tooke him.
I, oft, have heard him say, how he admir'd
Men of your large profession, that could speake
To every cause, and things mere contraries,
Till they were hoarse againe, yet all bee *Law* ;
That, with most quicke agility, could turne,
And returne ; make knots, and undoe them ;
Give forked counsell ; take provoking gold
On eyther hand, and put it up : These men,
He knewe, would thrive, with their humility.
And (for his part) he thought, he should be blest
To have his heyre of such a suffering spirit,
So wise, so grave, of so perplex'd a tongue,
And loud withall, that would not wag, nor scarce
Lie still, without a fee ; when every word
Your worship but lets fall, is a *Cecchine*.
Who's that? One knockes, I would not have you seene, Sr.
And yet—pretend you came, and went in hast ;

THE FOXE

Ile fashion an excuse. And, gentle Sir,
When you do come to swim, in golden lard,
Up to the armes, in honey, that your chin
Is borne up stiffe, with fatnesse of the flood,
Think on your vassall ; but remember mee :
I ha'not beene your worst of clients.

VOLTORE.

Mosca——

MOSCA.

When will you have your inventory brought, Sr
Or see a copy of the Will? Anone,
Ile bring 'hem to you Sir. Away, be gon,
Put businesse i' your face.

VOLPONE.

Excellent *Mosca* !

Come hither, let me kisse thee.

MOSCA.

Keepe you still Sir.

Here is *Corbaccio*.

VOLPONE.

Set the plate away,

The Vulture's gone, and the old Raven's come.

ACT I. SCENE 4.

MOSCA. CORBACCIO. VOLPONE.

MOSCA.

Betake you, to your silence, and your sleepe :
Stand there, and multiply. Now, shall we see
A wretch, who is (indeed) more impotent,
Than this can fayne to bee ; yet hopes to hop
Over his grave.

THE FOXE

Signior *Corbaccio*,

Yo' are very welcome, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

How do's your Patron?

MOSCA.

Troth, as he did, Sir, no amends.

CORBACCIO.

What? mendes hee?

MOSCA.

No, Sir: he is rather worse.

CORBACCIO.

That's well. Where is he?

MOSCA.

Upon his couch, Sir, newly fall'n a sleepe.

CORBACCIO.

Do's hee sleepe well?

MOSCA.

No winke, Sir, all this night,

Nor yesterday, but slumbers.

CORBACCIO.

Good. He should take

Some counsell of *Physitians*: I have brought him

An *Opiate* here, from mine owne *Doctor*——

MOSCA.

He will not heare of drugs.

CORBACCIO.

Why? I my selfe

Stood by, while't was made; saw all th' ingredients:

And know, it cannot but most gently worke:

My life for his, 'tis but to make him sleepe.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

I, his last sleepe, if he would take it.

MOSCA.

Sir, he ha's no faith in physick.

CORBACCIO.

'Say you ? 'say you ?

MOSCA.

He has no faith in Physick : He do's thinke
Most of your *Doctors* are the greater danger,
And worse disease, t' escape. I often have
Heard him protest that your *Physitian*
Should never be his heyre.

CORBACCIO.

Not I his heyre ?

MOSCA.

Not your *Physitian*, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

O, no, no, no, I do not meane it.

MOSCA.

No Sir, nor their fees
He cannot brooke : He sayes, they flea a man,
Before they kill him.

CORBACCIO.

Right, I conceive you.

MOSCA.

And then, they doe it by experiment ;
For which the *Law* not onely doth absolve 'hem,
But gives them great reward : And, he is loath
To hire his death, so.

CORBACCIO.

It is true, they kill,
With as much licence, as a Judge.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Nay, more ; for he but kills, Sir, where the *Law* condemnes,
And these can kill him, too ;

CORBACCIO.

I, or mee : or any man. How do's his *Apoplexe* ?
Is that strong on him, still ?

MOSCA.

Most violent. His speech is broken, and his eyes are set,
His face drawne longer, then 'twas wont——

CORBACCIO.

How ? how ?
Stronger, then he was wont ?

MOSCA.

No, Sir : his face
Drawne longer, then 'twas wont.

CORBACCIO.

O, good.

MOSCA.

His mouth is ever gaping, and his eye-lids hang.

CORBACCIO.

Good.

MOSCA.

A freezing numnesse stiffens all his joynts,
And makes the colour of his flesh like lead.

CORBACCIO.

'Tis good.

MOSCA.

His pulse beats slow, and dull.

CORBACCIO.

Good *symptomes* still.

MOSCA.

And, from his braine——

THE FOXE

CORBACCIO.

Ha? how? not from his braine?

MOSCA.

Yes, Sir, and from his braine——

CORBACCIO.

I conceive you, good.

MOSCA.

Flowes a cold sweat, with a continuall rhowme,
Forth the resolved corners of his eyes.

CORBACCIO.

Is't possible? yet I am better, ha!

How do's he, with the *swimming of his head*?

MOSCA.

Oh, Sir, 'tis past, the *Scotomy**; he, now,
Hath lost his feeling, and hath left to snort:
You hardly can perceive him, that he breaths.

CORBACCIO.

Excellent, excellent, sure I shall outlast him:
This makes me young againe, a score of yeares.

MOSCA.

I was a coming for you, sir.

CORBACCIO.

Has he made his Will?
What has he giv'n me?

MOSCA.

No, sir.

CORBACCIO.

Nothing? ha?

MOSCA.

He has not made his Will, Sir.

* *Scotomia* is a dizziness or swimming in the head.

THE FOXE

CORBACCIO.

Oh, oh, oh,

But what did *Voltore*, the Lawyer, here?

MOSCA.

He smelt a carcassee, Sir, when he but heard

My master was about his Testament;

As I did urge him to it, for your good——

CORBACCIO.

He came unto him, did he? I thought so.

MOSCA.

Yes, and presented him this peece of plate.

CORBACCIO.

To be his heire?

MOSCA.

I do not know, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

True, I know it too.

MOSCA.

By your owne scale, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Well, I shall prevent him yet. See, *Mosca*, looke,

Here, I have brought a bag of bright *cecchines*,

Will quite weigh downe his plate.

MOSCA.

Yea marry, Sir.

This is true *Physick*, this your *sacred Medicine*;

No talke of *Opiates* to this great *Elixir*.

CORBACCIO.

'Tis *Aurum palpabile*, if not *potabile*.

MOSCA.

It shall be minister'd to him, in his boule?

THE FOXE

CORBACCIO.

I, doe, doe, doe.

MOSCA.

Most blessed *Cordiall*,
This will recover him.

CORBACCIO.

Yes, doe, doe, doe.

MOSCA.

I thinke, it were not best, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

What ?

MOSCA.

To recover him.

CORBACCIO.

O, no, no, no ; by no meanes.

MOSCA.

Why, Sir, this
Will worke some strange effect, if he but feele it.

CORBACCIO.

'Tis true, therefore forbear ; Ile take my venter :
Give mee 't againe.

MOSCA.

At no hand ; pardon mee :
You shall not do yourselfe that wrong, Sir. I
Will so advise you, you shall have it all.

CORBACCIO.

How ?

MOSCA.

All, sir ; 'tis your right, your own ; no man
Can claime a part : 'tis yours, without a rivall,
Decre'd by destiny.

THE FOXE

CORBACCIO.

How? how, good *Mosca*?

MOSCA.

Ile tell you, Sir. This fit he shall recover;

CORBACCIO.

I do conceive you.

MOSCA.

And, on first advantage
Of his gain'd sense, will I re-importune him
Unto the making of his Testament:
And shew him this.

CORBACCIO.

Good, good.

MOSCA.

'Tis better yet, if you will heare, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Yes, with all my heart.

MOSCA.

Now, would I counsell you, make home with speed;
There, frame a Will; whereto you shall inscribe
My maister your sole heyre.

CORBACCIO.

And disinherit my sonne?

MOSCA.

O Sir, the better: for that colour
Shall make it much more taking.

CORBACCIO.

O, but colour?

MOSCA.

This Will Sir, you shall send it unto me.
Now, when I come to inforce (as I will do)
Your cares, your watchings, and your many prayers,

THE FOXE

Your more than many gifts, your this dayes present,
And, last, produce your Will ; where (without thought,
Or least regard, unto your proper issue,
A sonne so brave, and highly meriting)
The streame of your diverted love hath throwne you
Upon my maister, and made him your heyre.
He cannot be so stupide, or stone dead,
But, out of conscience, and mere gratitude——

CORBACCIO.

He must pronounce me, his?

MOSCA.

'Tis true.

CORBACCIO.

This plot
Did I thinke on before.

MOSCA.

I do beleeve it.

CORBACCIO.

Do you not beleeve it?

MOSCA.

Yes, sir.

CORBACCIO.

Mine own project.

MOSCA.

Which when he hath done, Sir——

CORBACCIO.

Publish'd me his heire?

MOSCA.

And you so certaine to survive him——

CORBACCIO.

I.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Being so lusty a man

CORBACCIO.

'Tis true.

MOSCA.

Yes, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

I thought on that too. See, how he should be
The very organ, to expresse my thoughts!

MOSCA.

You have not onely done yourselfe a good,

CORBACCIO.

But multiplied it on my sonne?

MOSCA.

'Tis right, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Still, my invention.

MOSCA.

'Lasse, Sir, heaven knows,
It hathe beene all my study, all my care,
(I e'ene grow grey withall), how to worke things——

CORBACCIO.

I do conceive, sweet *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

You are he
For whom I labour, here.

CORBACCIO.

I, doe, doe, doe :
Ile straight about it.

MOSCA.

Rooke go with you, Raven.

THE FOXE

CORBACCIO.

I know thee honest.

MOSCA.

You do lie, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

And——

MOSCA.

Your knowledge is no better than your eares Sir.

CORBACCIO.

I do not doubt, to be a father to thee.

MOSCA.

Nor I, to gull my brother of his blessing.

CORBACCIO.

I may ha' my youth restor'd to mee, why not?

MOSCA.

Your worship is a precious asse.

CORBACCIO.

What sai'st thou?

MOSCA.

I do desire your worship, to make haste, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

'Tis done, 'tis done, I go.

VOLPONE.

O, I shall burst ;

Let out my sides, let out my sides——

MOSCA.

Containe

Your fluxe of laughter, Sir : you know, this hope

Is such a baite, it covers any hooke.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

O, but thy working, and thy placing it!
I cannot hold; good rascal, let me kisse thee:
I never knew thee, in so rare a humor.

MOSCA.

Alas, Sir, I but do, as I am taught;
Follow your grave instructions; give 'hem words;
Powre oyle into their ears: and send them hence.

VOLPONE.

'Tis true, 'tis true. What a rare punishment
Is avarice, to it selfe?

MOSCA.

I, with our helpe, Sir.

VOLPONE.

So many cares, so many maladies,
So many feares attending on old age.
Yea, death so often call'd on, as no wish
Can be more frequent with 'hem, their limbes faint,
Their senses dull, their seeing, hearing, going
All dead before them; yea, their very teeth,
Their instruments of eating, failing them:
Yet this is reckoned life! Nay, here was one,
Is now gone home, that wishes to live longer!
Feeles not his gout, nor palsy; faines himself
Yonger, by scores of yeares, flatters his age
With confident belying it, hopes he may
With charms like *Æson*, have his youth restor'd,
And with these thoughts so battens, as if *Fate*
Would be as easily cheated on, as he,
And all turns ayre! Who's that, there, now? a third?

MOSCA.

Close, to your couch againe; I heare his voice.
It is *Corvino*, our spruce merchant.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

Dead.

MOSCA.

Another bout, Sir, with your eyes [*anointing them*]. Who's there?

ACT I. SCENE 5.

MOSCA. CORVINO. VOLPONE.

MOSCA.

Signior *Corvino*! come most wisht for! O,
How happy werè you, if you knew it, now!

CORVINO.

Why? what? wherein?

MOSCA.

The tardie houre is come, Sir.

CORVINO.

He is not dead?

MOSCA.

Not dead, Sir, but as good;
He knows no man.

CORVINO.

How shall I do then?

MOSCA.

Why, Sir?

CORVINO.

I have brought him here, a Pearle.

MOSCA.

Perhaps, he has
So much remembrance left, as to know you, Sir;

THE FOXE

He still calls on you ; nothing but your name
Is in his mouth : Is your Pearle orient, Sir ?

CORVINO.

Venice was never owner of the like.

VOLPONE.

Signior *Corvino*.

MOSCA.

Hearke.

VOLPONE.

Signior *Corvino*.

MOSCA.

He calls you, step and give it him. H'is here, Sir.
And he has brought you a rich Pearl.

CORVINO.

How doe you, Sir ?

Tell him, it doubles the twelve *Caract*.

MOSCA.

Sir, he cannot understand, his hearing's gone ;
And yet it comforts him, to see you——

CORVINO.

Say,

I have a Diamant for him, too.

MOSCA.

Best shew't, Sir ;

Put it into his hand ; 'tis onely there

He apprehends : he has his feeling, yet.

See, how he graspes it !

CORVINO.

'Lasse, good gentleman !

How pittiful the sight is !

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Tut, forget, Sir.

The weeping of an heyre should still be laughter
Under a visor.

CORVINO.

Why? am I his heyre?

MOSCA.

Sir, I am sworne, I may not shew the Will,
Till he be dead : But, here has beene *Corbaccio*,
Here has beene *Voltore*, here were others too,
I cannot number 'hem, they were so many,
All gaping here for legacyes ; but I,
Taking the vantage of his naming you,
(Signior *Corvino*, Signior *Corvino*,) tooke
Paper, and pen, and ynke, and there I ask'd him
Whom he would have his heyre? *Corvino* : Who,
Should be executor, *Corvino* : And,
To any question, he was silent too
I still interpreted the noddles, he made,
(Through weaknesse) for consent : and sent home th' others,
Nothing bequeathed them, but to crie, and curse.

CORVINO.

O, my dear *Mosca*. Do's he not perceive us?

MOSCA.

No more then a blinde harper. He knowes no man,
No face of friend, nor name of any servant,
Who't was that fed him last, or gave him drinke :
Not those, he hath begotten, or brought up
Can he remember.

CORVINO.

Has he children?

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Bastards,
Some dozen, or more, that he begot on beggars,
Gipseys, and *Jewes*, and *Black-moores*, when he was drunke.
Knew you not that, Sir? 'Tis the common fable.
The Dwarfe, the Foole, the Eunuch are all his;
H'is the true father of his familie,
In all, save mee: but he has giv'n 'hem nothing.

CORVINO.

That's well, that's well. Art sure he does not heare us?

MOSCA.

Sure Sir? why looke you, credit your owne sense.
The Poxe approach, and adde to your diseases,
If it would sende you hence the sooner, Sir,
For, your incontinence, it hath deserv'd it
Thoroughly, and throughly, and the *Plague* to boot.
(You may come neere, Sir.) Would you would once close
Those filthy eyes of yours, that flowe with slime,
Like two frog-pits; and those same hanging cheekes,
Cover'd with hide, in steede of skinne: (nay helpe, Sir)
That looke like frozen dish-clouts, set on end.

CORVINO.

Or, like an old smoak'd wall, on which the raine
Ran downe in streakes.

MOSCA.

Excellent, Sir, speake out;
You may be lowder yet: A Culvering,
Discharged in his eare would hardly bore it.

CORVINO.

His nose is like a common sewre, still running;

MOSCA.

'Tis good: and, what his mouth?

THE FOXE

CORVINO.

A very draught.

MOSCA.

O, stop 'it up——

CORVINO.

By no meanes ;

MOSCA.

Pray you let mee.

Faith, I could stifle him, rarely, with a pillow,

As well, as any woman, that should keepe him.

CORVINO.

Do as you will, but Ile be-gone.

MOSCA.

Be so ; it is your presence makes him last so long.

CORVINO.

I pray you, use no violence.

MOSCA.

No, Sir ? why ?

Why should you be thus scrupulous ? 'pray you, Sir ?

CORVINO.

Nay, at your discretion.

MOSCA.

Well, good Sir, be gone.

CORVINO.

I will not trouble him now, to take my Pearle.

MOSCA.

Puh, nor your Diamant. What a needelesse care

Is this afflicts you ? Is not all, here yours ?

Am not I here ? whom you have made ? your creature ?

That owe my beeing to you ?

THE FOXE

CORVINO.

Gratefull *Mosca* :

Thou art my friend, my fellow, my companion,
My partner, and shalt share in all my fortunes.

MOSCA.

Excepting one.

CORVINO.

What's that ?

MOSCA.

Your gallant wife, Sir.

Now, is he gone : we had no other meanes,
To shoote him hence, but this.

VOLPONE.

My divine *Mosca* !

Thou hast to-day out-gone thy selfe. Who's there ?

I will be troubled with no more. Prepare

Me musicke, dances, banquets, all delights ;

The *Turke* is not more sensual, in his pleasures

Than will *Volpone*. Let me see, a Pearle ?

A Diamant ? Plate ? *Cecchines* ? good mornings purchase ;

Why this is better than rob *Churches*, yet :

Or fat, by eating (once a mont'h) a man. Who is't ?

MOSCA.

The beauteous Lady *Would-bee*, Sir.

Wife, to the *English Knight*; Sir *Politique Would-bee*,

(This is the stile, Sir, is directed mee)

Hath sent to know, how you have slept to night,

And if you would be visited.

VOLPONE.

Not, now. Some three houres, hence.

MOSCA.

I told the *Squire*, so much.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

When I am high with mirth, and wine ; then, then.
'Fore heaven, I wonder at the desperate valure
Of the bold *English*, that they dare let loose
Their wives, to all encounters !

MOSCA.

Sir, this Knight
Had not his name for nothing, he is *politique*,
And knowes, how ere his wife affect strange ayres,
She hath not yet the face, to be dishonest.
But had she Signior *Corvino's* wive's face——

VOLPONE.

Has she so rare a face ?

MOSCA.

O Sir, the wonder,
The blazing Starre of *Italy* ; a wench
O' the first yeare, a beauty, ripe as harvest !
Whose skinne is whiter than a *Swan*, all over !
Than *silver*, *snow*, or *lillies* ! a soft lip,
Would tempt you to eternity of kissing !
And flesh, that melteth, in the touch, to bloud !
Bright as your gold, and lovely, as your gold !

VOLPONE.

Why had not I knowne this, before ?

MOSCA.

Alas, Sir,
My selfe, but yesterday, discover'd it.

VOLPONE.

How might I see her ?

MOSCA.

O, not possible ;
Shee's kept as warily, as is your gold :

THE FOXE

Never do's come abroad, never takes ayre,
But at a windore. All her lookes are sweet,
As the first grapes, or cherries; and are watch'd
As neare, as they are.

VOLPONE.

I must see her——

MOSCA.

Sir, there is a guard, of ten spies thick, upon her;
All his whole houshold: each of which is set
Upon his fellow, and have all their charge,
When he goes out, when he comes in, examin'd.

VOLPONE.

I will go see her, though but at her windore.

MOSCA.

In some disguise, then?

VOLPONE.

That is true, I must
Maintaine mine owne shape, still, the same: wee'll thinke.

ACT 2. SCENE 1.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE. PEREGRINE.



SIR POLITIQUE
WOULD-BEE.

Sir, to a wise
man, all the
world's his
soile.

It is not *Italy*,
nor *France*,
nor *Europe*,

That must bound
me, if my *Fates*
call me forth,

Yet, I protest,
it is no salt
desire

Of seeing *Coun-*
tries, shifting a
Religion,

Nor any dis-
affection to the
State

Where I was bred, (and unto which I owe
My dearest plots) hath brought me out ; much lesse,
That idle, antique, stale, grey-headed project
Of knowing men's mindes, and manners, with *Ulisses* :
But, a peculiar humour of my wives,

THE FOXE

Layd for this height of *Venice*, to observe,
To quote, to learne the language, and so forth——
I hope you travell, Sir, with licence ?

PEREGRINE.

Yes :

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I dare the safelier converse——How long, Sir,
Since you left *England* ?

PEREGRINE.

Seven weekes.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

So lately !

You ha' not beene with my Lord *Ambassador* ?

PEREGRINE.

Not yet, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Pray you, what newes, Sir, vents our climate ?

I heard, last night, a most strange thing reported

By some of my Lord's followers, and I long

To heare, how't will be seconded !

PEREGRINE.

What was't, Sir ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Marry, Sir, of a Raven that should build

In a ship royall of the *Kings*.

PEREGRINE.

This fellow

Do's he' gull me, trow ? or is gull'd ? Your name, Sir ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

My name is *Politique Would-bee*.

THE FOXE

PEREGRINE.

O, that speaks him.

A Knight, Sir ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

A poore Knight, Sir.

PEREGRINE.

Your Lady lies here, in *Venice*, for intelligence
Of tires, and fashions, and behaviour,
Among the Curtizans ? the fine *Lady Would-bee* ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Yes ; Sir ; the spider, and the bee, oft times,
Suck from one flower.

PEREGRINE.

Good Sir Politique !

I crie you mercy ; I have heard much of you :

'Tis true, Sir, of your Raven.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

On your knowledge ?

PEREGRINE.

Yes, and your Lions whelping, in the *Tower*.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Another whelp ?

PEREGRINE.

Another, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Now heaven ! What prodigies be these ? The Fires at *Berwike* !
And the new *Starre* ! these things concurring, strange !
And full of *omen* ! Saw you those *Meteors* ?

PEREGRINE.

I did Sir.

THE FOXE

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Fearefull! Pray you Sir, confirme me,
Were there three Porcpisces seene, above the *Bridge*,
As they give out?

PEREGRINE.

Sixe, and a Sturgeon, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I am astonish'd.

PEREGRINE.

Nay, Sir, be not so ;
He tell you a greater prodigie, than these——

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

What should these things, portend !

PEREGRINE.

The very day
(Let me be sure) that I put forth from *London*,
There was a Whale discover'd, in the river,
As high as *Woollwich*, that had waited there
(Few know how many moneths) for the subversion
Of the *Stode-Fleete*.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Is't possible? Beleeeve it,
'Twas either sent from *Spaine*, or the *Arch-duke*,
Spinola's Whale, upon my life, my credit ;
Will they not leave these projects? Worthy Sir,
Some other newes.

PEREGRINE.

Faith, *Stone*, the Foole, is dead ;
And they do lack a taverne-Fool, extremely.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Is *Mass' Stone* dead?

THE FOXE

PEREGRINE.

H'is dead, Sir, why? I hope
You thought him not immortall? O, this Knight
(Were he well known) would be a precious thing
To fit our *English* Stage: He that should write
But such a fellow, should be thought to faine
Extremely, if not maliciously.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Stone dead?

PEREGRINE.

Dead. Lord! how deeply Sir you apprehend it?
He was no kinsman to you?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

That I know of.

Well! that same fellow was an unknowne Foole.

PEREGRINE.

And yet you know him, it seemes?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I did so. Sir, I knew him one of the most dangerous heads
Living within the *State*, and so I held him.

PEREGRINE.

Indeed Sir?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

While he liv'd, in action.
He has receiv'd weekly intelligence,
Upon my knowledge, out of the *Low Countries*,
(For all parts of the world) in cabages;
And those dispens'd, againe, to *Ambassadors*,
In oranges, musk-melons, apricocks,
Limons, pome-citrons, and suchlike: sometimes,
In *Colchester*-oysters, and your *Selsey*-cockles.

THE FOXE

PEREGRINE.

You make me wonder !

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir. Upon my knowledge.

Nay, I, have observ'd him, at your publique Ordinary,
Take his advertisement, from a *Traveller*
(A conceal'd *States-man*) in a trencher of meate ;
And, instantly, before the meale was done,
Convay an answer in a tooth-pick.

PEREGRINE.

Strange ! How could this be, Sir ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Why, the meate was cut
So like his character, and so layd, as he
Must easily read the cypher.

PEREGRINE.

I have heard, he could not read, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

So, 'twas given out,
(In pollitie), by those, that did imploy him :
But he could read, and had your *languages*,
And to't, as sound a noddle——

PEREGRINE.

I have heard, Sir,
That your *Babiouns* were spies ; and that they were
A kinde of subtle Nation, neare to *China* :

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I, I, your *Mamaluchi*. Faith, they had
Their hand in a *French* plot, or two ; but they
Were so extremely given to women, as
They made discovery of all : Yet I
Had my *advices* here (on wensday last)
From one of their owne coat, they were return'd,

THE FOXE

Made their relations (as the fashion is)
And now stand faire, for fresh imployment.

PEREGRINE.

'Hart!

This Sir *Poll*: will be ignorant of nothing.
It seemes Sir, you know all?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Not all Sir. But,
I have some generall notions ; I do love
To note, and to observe : Though I live out,
Free from the active torrent, yet I'd marke
The currents, and the passages of things,
For mine owne private use ; and know the ebbes,
And flowes of *State*.

PEREGRINE.

Beleeve it, Sir, I hold
Myselfe, in no small tie, unto my fortunes,
For casting mee thus luckely, upon you ;
Whose knowledge (if your bounty equall it)
May do me great assistance, in instruction
For my behaviour, and my bearing, which
Is yet so rude, and raw——

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Why? came you forth
Empty of rules, for travayle?

PEREGRINE.

Faith, I had
Some common ones, from out that vulgar *Grammar*,
Which hee, that cri'd *Italian* to mee, taught mee.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Why, this it is, that spoiles all our brave blouds,
Trusting our hopefull *gentry* unto *Pedants*,
Fellowes of out-side, and mere barke. You seem

THE FOXE

To be a gentleman, of ingenuous race——
I not professe it, but my fate hath beene
To be, where I have been consulted with,
In this high kinde, touching some great mens sonnes,
Persons of bloud, and honor.——

PEREGRINE.

Who be these, Sir?

ACT 2. SCENE 2.

MOSCA. POLITIQUE. PEREGRINE. VOLPONE.
NANO. GREGE.

MOSCA.

Under that windore, there 't must be. The same :

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Fellowes, to mount a banke ! Did your instructor
In the deare *Tongues*, never discourse to you
Of the *Italian Montebankes* ?

PEREGRINE.

Yes, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Why, here shall you see one.

PEREGRINE.

They are *Quack-Salvers*,
Fellowes, that live by venting oyles, and drugs ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Was that the character hee gave you of them ?

THE FOXE

PEREGRINE.

As I remember.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Pittie his ignorance.

They are the onely-knowing men of *Europe*,
Great, generall *Schollers*, excellent *Phisitions*,
Most admir'd *States-men*, profest *Favorites*,
And cabinet-*Councillors*, to the greatest *Princes* :
The onely *Languag'd-men*, of all the world.

PEREGRINE.

And, I have heard, they are most lewd impostors ;
Made all of termes, and shreds ; no lesse beliers
Of great-men's favours, then their owne vile med'cines ;
Which they will utter, upon monstrous othes :
Selling that drug, for two pence, ere they part,
Which they have valew'd at twelve *Crownes*, before.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir, calumnies are answer'd best with silence ;
Your selfe shall judge. Who is it mounts, my friends ?

MOSCA.

Scoto of Mantua, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Is't hee ? Nay, then
Ile proudly promise, Sir, you shall behold
Another man, then has beene phant'sied, to you.
I wonder, yet, that hee should mount his banke,
Here, in this nooke, that has beene wont t'appare
In face of the *Piazza* ! Here, he comes.

VOLPONE.

Mount, *Zany*.

GREGE.

Follow, follow, follow, follow, follow.

THE FOXE

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

See how the people follow him! hee's à man
May write 10000 Crownes in Banke, here. Note,
Marke but his gesture; I do use to observe
The state he keepes, in getting up!

PEREGRINE.

Tis worth it, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Most noble Gent: and my worthy Patrons, it may seeme strange, that I, your SCOTO MANTUANO, who was ever wont to fixe my Banke in the face of the publike Piazza, neare the shelter of the portico to the Procuratia, should, now (after eight months' absence from this illustrious City of Venice) humbly retire my selfe, into an obscure nooke of the Piazza;

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Did not I, now, object the same?

PEREGRINE.

Peace, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Let me tel you: I am not (as your Lombard Proverbe sayth) cold on my feete, or content to part with my commodities at a cheaper rate, then I accustomed; looke not for it. Nor, that the calumnious reports of that impudent detractor, and shame to our profession (Alessandro Buttone, I meane), who gave out, in publike, I was condemn'd a 'Sforzato to the Galleys, for poysoning the Cardinall Bembo's—cooke, hath at all attached; much lesse delected mee. No, no, worthie Gent: (to tell you true) I cannot indure, to see the rable of these ground Ciarlitani, that spread their clokes on the pavement, as if they meant to do feates of activitie, and then come in, lamely, with their mouldy tales out of Boccacio, like stale Tabarine, the Fabulist: some of them discoursing their travells, and of their tedious captivity in the Turkes Galleyes, when, indeed (were the truth knowne) they were the Christians Galleyes, where very temperately, they eate bread, & drunke water, as a wholesome pennance (enjoy'n'd them by their Confessors) for base pilferies.'

THE FOXE

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Note but his bearing, and contempt of these.

VOLPONE.

These turdy-facy-nasty-patie-lousie-farticall rogues, with one poore groats-worth of unprepar'd antimony, finely wrapt up in severall 'Scartoccios, are able, very well, to kill their twenty a weeke, and play; yet these meagre steru'd spirits, who have halfe stopt the organs of their mindes with earthy oppilations, want not their favourers among your shrivel'd, sallad-eating Artisans: who are overjoy'd that they may have their halfepe'rth of Physick, though it purge 'hem into another world, makes no matter.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Excellent! ha you heard better *Language*, Sir?

VOLPONE.

Well, let 'hem go: And, Gentlemen, honourable Gentlemen, know, that for this time, our Banque, being thus remov'd from the clamours of the Canaglia, shall be the Scene of pleasure and delight; For I have nothing to sell, little or nothing to sell.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I told you, Sir; his ende.

PEREGRINE.

You did so, Sir.

VOLPONE.

I protest, I, and my sixe servants, are not able to make of this pretious liquor, so fast, as it is fetch'd away from my lodging, by Gentlemen of your Citty; Strangers of the Terra-ferma; worshipful Merchants; I, and Senators too: who, ever since my arrivall, have detained me to their uses, by their splendidous liberalities. And worthily. For, what awayles your rich man to have his magazines stuff with Moscadelli, or the purest grape, when his Physitians prescribe him (on paine of death) to drink nothing but water, cocted with Anise-seeds? O health! health! the blessing of the rich, the riches of the poore! who can buy thee at to

THE FOXE

deare a rate, since there is no enjoying this world, without thee? Be not then so sparing of your purses, honourable Gentlemen, as to abridge the naturall course of life——

PEREGRINE.

You see his ende?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I, is't not good?

VOLPONE.

For, when a humide Fluxe, or Catarrhe, by the mutability of ayre, falls from your head, into an arme or shoulder, or any other part; take you a Ducket, or your Cecchine of gold, and applie to the place affected: see, what good effect it can worke. No, no, 'tis this blessed Unguento, this rare Extraction, that hath onely power to disperse all malignant humors, that procede, either of hot, cold, moist, or windy causes——

PEREGRINE.

I would he had put in dry to.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

'Pray you, observe.

VOLPONE.

To fortifie the most indigest, and crude stomacke, I, were it of one, that (through extreme weakenesse) vomited bloud, applying only a warme napkin to the place, after the unction, and fricace; For the Vertigine in the head, putting but a drop into your nostrills, likewise, behind the eares; a most soveraigne, and approved remedy. The Mall-caduco, Crampes, Convulsions, Paralysies, Epilepsies, Tremor-cordia, retired-Nerves, ill Vapours of the spleene, Stoppings of the Liver, the Stone, the Strangury, Hernia ventosa, Iliaca passio; stops a Disenteria, immediatly; easeth the torsion of the small guts: and cures Melancholia hypochondriaca, being taken and applyed, according to my printed Receipt. For, this is the Physitian, this the medicine; this counsell, this cures; this gives the direction, this works the effect: and (in summe) both together may be term'd an abstract of the theorick and practick in the Æsculapian Art. 'Twill

THE FOXE

cost you eight Crownes. And, Zan Fritada, 'pray thee sing a verse, extempore, in honour of it.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

How do you like him, Sir ?

PEREGRINE.

Most strangely, I !

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Is not his language rare ?

PEREGRINE.

But *Alchimy*, I never heard the like : or *Broughtons* bookes.

SONG.

*Had old Hippocrates, or Galen,
(That to their bookes put med'cines all in)
But knowne this secret, they had never
(Of which they will bee guilty ever)
Beene murderers of so much paper,
Or wasted many a hurtelesse taper :
No Indian drug had ere beene famed,
Tabacco, Sassafras not named ;
Ne yet, of Guacum, one small stick, Sir,
Nor Raymund Lullies greate Elixir.
Ne had beene knowne the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus, with his long-sword.*

PEREGRINE.

All this, yet, will not do ; eight Crownes is high.

VOLPONE.

*No more ; Gentlemen, if I had but time to discourse to you the
miraculous effects of this my oyle, surnamed Oglio del Scoto, with the
Count-lesse Catalogue of those I have cured of th'aforesajd, and many
more diseases, the Pattents and Priviledges of all the Princes and
Common-wealths of Christendome, or but the depositions of those that*

THE FOXE

appear'd on my part, before the Signiry of the Sanità and most learned Colledge of Physitians; where I was authorized, upon notice taken of the admirable vertues of my medicaments, and mine owne excellency, in matter of rare, and unknowne secrets, not onely to disperse them publicuely in this famous Citty, but in all the Territories, that happely joy under the government of the most pious and magnificent States of Italy. But may some other gallant fellow say, O, there be divers, that make profession to have as good, and as experimented receipts, as yours: Indeed, very many have assay'd, like Apes, in imitation of that, which is really, and essentially in mee, to make of this oyle; bestow'd great cost in furnaces, stilles, alembekes, continuall fires, and preparation of the ingredients, as indeede there goes to it sixe hundred severall Simples, beside, some quantity of humane fat, for the conglutination, which we buy of the Anatomistes; But, when these Practitioners come to the last decoction, blow, blow, puff, puff, and all flies in fumo: ha, ha, ha. Poore wretches! I rather pitty their folly, and indiscretion, then their losse of time, and money; for those may be recover'd by industry: but to be a Foole borne, is a disease incurable. For my self, I alwaies from my youth have indevor'd to get the rarest secrets, and booke them; eyther in exchange, or for money; I spared nor cost, nor labour, where any thing was worthy to be learned. And, Gentlemen, honourable Gentlemen, I will undertake, (by vertue of Chymicall Art,) out of the honourable hat, that covers your head, to extract the foure Elements; that is to say, the Fire, Ayre, Water, and Earth, and returne you your felt, without burne or staine. For, whil'st others have beene at the balloo, I have beene at my booke; and am now past the craggy pathes of study, and come to the flowrie plaines of honour, and reputation.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I do assure you, Sir, that is his ayme.

VOLPONE.

But, to our price.

PEREGRINE.

And that withall, Sir Poll.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

You all know (honourable Gentlemen) I never valew'd this ampulla, or violl, at lesse then eight Crownes, but for this time, I am content, to be depriv'd of it for sixe; sixe Crownes is the price; and lesse in curtesie, I know you cannot offer mee; take it, or leave it, howsoever, both it, and I am at your service. I aske you not, as the valew of the thing, for then I should demand of you a thousand Crownes, so the Cardinalls Montalto, Fernese, the great Duke of Tuscany, my Gossip, with divers other Princes have given me; but I despise money: only to shew my affection to you, honorable Gentlemen, and your illustrious State here, I have neglected the messages of these Princes, mine owne offices, fram'd my journey hither, onely to present you with the fruicts of my travells. Tune your voyces once more, to the touch of your instruments, and give the honorable assembly some delightfull recreation.

PEREGRINE.

What monstrous, and most painefull circumstance
Is here, to get some three, or four *Gazetz*?
Some three-pence, i' th' whole, for that 'twill come too.

SONG.

*You that would last long, list to my song,
Make no more coyle, but buy of this oyle.
Would you be ever faire? and yong?
Stout of teeth? and strong of tongue?
Tart of Palat? quick of eare?
Sharpe of sight? of nostrill cleare?
Moist of hand? and light of foot?
(Or I will come neerer to't)
Would you live free from all diseases?
Do the act, your mistres pleases;
Yet fright all aches from your bones?
Here's a med'cine, for the nones.*

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

Well, I am in a humor (at this time) to make a present of the quantity my coffer containes: to the rich, in courtesie, and to the poore, for Gods sake. Wherefore, nowe marke; I ask'd you six Crownes, and six Crownes, at other times, you have payd mee; you shall not give mee six Crownes, nor five, nor foure, nor three, nor two, nor one; nor halfe a Duckat; no, nor a Muccinigo. Six pence it will cost you, or sixe hundred pound—expect no lower price, for, by the banner of my front, I will not bate a bagatine, that I will have, only, a pledge of your loves, to carry something from amongst you, to shew, I am not contemn'd by you. Therefore, now, tosse your handkerchiefes, chearefully, chearefully; and bee advertised, that the first heroique spirit, that deignes to grace mee with a handkerchiefe, I will give it a little remembrance of something, beside, shall please it better, then if I had presented it with a double Pistolet.

PEREGRINE.

Will you be that heroique Sparke, Sir Pol?

O see! the windore has prevented you.

VOLPONE.

Lady, I kisse your bounty; and, for this timely grace, you have done your poore Scoto of Mantua, I will returne you, over and above my oyle, a secret, of that high, and inestimable nature, shall make you for ever enamour'd on that minute, wherein your eye first descended on so meane, yet not altogether to be despis'd, an object. Here is a Poulder, conceal'd in this paper, of which, if I should speake to the worth, nine thousand volumes were but as one page, that page as a line, that line as a word; so short is this Pilgrimage of man (which some call Life) to the expressing of it: would I reflect on the price? why, the whole World were but as an Empire, that empire as a Province, that Province as a Banke, that Banke as a private Purse, to the purchase of it. I will, onely, tell you; it is the Poulder that made Venus a Goddessse (given her by Apollo) that kept her perpetually yong, clear'd her wringles, firm'd her gummes, fill'd her skinne, colour'd her hayre; From her, deriv'd to Helen, and at the sack of Troy (unfortunately) lost: Till now, in this our age, it was as happily recover'd, by a studious Antiquary, out of some ruines of Asia, who sent a

THE FOXE

moyetie of it, to the Court of France (but much sophisticated) wherewith the Ladyes there, now, colour their hayre. The rest (at this present) remains with mee; extracted, to a Quintessence.: so that, where ever it but touches, in youth it perpetually preserves, in age restores the complexion; seats your teeth, did they dance like Virginall jacks, firme as a wall; makes them white, as Ivory, that were black, as——

ACT 2. SCENE 3.

CORVINO. POLITIQUE. PEREGRINE.

Bloud of the devill, and my shame! come downe, here;
Come downe: No house but mine to make your *Scene*?
Signior Flaminio, will you downe, Sir? downe?
What, is my wife your *Franciscina*? Sir?
No windores on the whole *Piazza*, here,
To make your properties, but mine? but mine?
Hart! ere to morrow, I shall be new christen'd,
And cald the *Pantalone di Besogniosi*,
About the towne.

PEREGRINE.

What should this meane, Sir *Poll*?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Some trick of *State*, beleeeve it. I will home.

PEREGRINE.

It may be some designe on you:

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I knowe not. Ile stand upon my gard.

PEREGRINE.

'Tis your best, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

This threè weekes, all my *advices*, all my letters,
They have been intercepted.

THE FOXE

PEREGRINE.

Indeed, Sir ? Best have a care.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Nay so I will.

PEREGRINE.

This Knight, I may not loose him, for my mirth, till night.

ACT 2. SCENE 4.

VOLPONE. MOSCA.

VOLPONE.

O I am wounded.

MOSCA.

Where, Sir ?

VOLPONE.

Not without ;

Those blowes were nothing : I could beare them ever.

But angry *Cupid*, bowlting from her eyes,

Hath shot himselfe into me, like a flame ;

Where, now, he flings about his burning heat,

As in a furnace, some ambitious fire,

Whose vent is stopt. The fight is all within mee.

I cannot live, except thou helpe me, *Mosca* ;

My liver melts, and I, without the hope

Of some soft ayre, from her refreshing breath,

Am but a heape of cinders.

MOSCA.

'Lasse, good Sir, would you had never seene her.

VOLPONE.

Nay, would thou had'st never told me of her.

MOSCA.

Sir 'tis true ; I do confesse, I was unfortunate,

THE FOXE

And you unhappy : but I' am bound in conscience,
No lesse then duety, to effect my best
To your release of torment, and I will, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Deare *Mosca*, shall I hope ?

MOSCA.

Sir, more than deare,
I will not bidd you to dispaire of ought
Within a humane compasse.

VOLPONE.

O, there spoke my better *Angell*. *Mosca*, take my keyes,
Gold, plate, and iewells, all's at thy devotion ;
Employ them, how thou wilt ; nay, coyne me, too ;
So thou, in this, but crowne my longings, *Mosca* ?

MOSCA.

Use but your patience.

VOLPONE.

So I have.

MOSCA.

I doubt not but bring successe to your desires.

VOLPONE.

Nay, then, I not repent me of my late disguise.

MOSCA.

If you can horne him, Sir, you neede not.

VOLPONE.

True : Besides, I never meant him for my heyre.
Is not the colour of my beard and eye-brows,
To make me knowne ?

MOSCA.

No iot.

VOLPONE.

I did it well.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

So well, would I could follow you in mine,
With halfe the happinesse ; and, yet, I would
Escape your *Epilogue*.

VOLPONE.

But were they gull'd
With a beleefe, that I was *Scoto* ?

MOSCA.

Sir,
Scoto himselfe could hardly have distinguish'd ;
I have not time to flatter you, wee'll part :
And, as I prosper, so applaud my art.

ACT 2. SCENE 5.

CORVINO. CELIA. SERVITORE.

Death of mine honour, with the Citties *Foole* ?
A iugling, tooth-drawing, prating *Montebanke* ?
And, at a public windore ? where whil'st hee,
With his strain'd action, and his dole of faces,
To his *drug-Lecture* drawes your itching eares,
A crewe of old, un-mari'd, noted lechers,
Stood leering up, like *Satyres* ; and you smile,
Most graciously ? and fanne your favours forth,
To give your hote *Spectators* satisfaction ?
What ; was your *Montebanke* their call ? their whistle ?
Or were you enamour'd on his copper rings ?
His saffron iewell, with the toade-stone in't ?
Or his imbroydered sute, with the cope-stitch,
Made of a herse-cloth ? or his old tilt-feather ?
Or his starch'd beard ? well ; you shall have him, yes.
He shall come home, and minister unto you

THE FOXE

The *fricace*, for the *Mother*. Or, let me see,
I thinke, you 'had rather mount? would you not mount?
Why, if you'll mount, you may; yes, truely, you may:
And so, you may be seene, downe to' th' foote.
Get you a citterne, *Lady Vanity*,
And be a *Dealer*, with the *Vertuous Man*;
Make one: Ile but protest myselfe a cuckold,
And save your dowry, I am a *Dutchman*, I;
For, if you thought me an *Italian*,
You would be damn'd, ere you did this, you Whore:
Thou'ldst tremble, to imagine, that the murder
Of father, mother, brother, all thy race,
Should follow, as the subject of my iustice.

CELIA.

Good Sir, have pacience.

CORVINO.

What couldst thou propose
Lesse to thyselfe, then, in this heate of wrath,
And stung with my dishonour, I should strike
This steele unto thee, with as many stabs,
As thou wert gaz'd upon with goatish eyes?

CELIA.

Alas, Sir, be appeas'd; I could not thinke
My being at the windore should more, now,
Move your impatience, then at other times:

CORVINO.

No? not to seeke, and entertaine a *parlee*;
With a knowne knave? before a multitude?
You were an *Actor*, with your handkercheife;
Which he, most sweetly, kist in the receipt,
And might (no doubt) returne it, with a letter,
And point the place, where you might meete: your sisters,
Your mothers, or your aunts might serve the turne.

THE FOXE

CELIA.

Why, deare Sir, when do I make these excuses?
Or ever stirre, abroad, but to the *Church*?
And that, so seldome——

CORVINO.

Well, it shall be lesse;
And thy restraint, before, was liberty,
To what I now decree: And therefore, marke mee.
First, I will have this baudy light damn'd up;
And, till't be done, some two, or three yards of,
Ile chalke a line: ore which, if thou but (chance
To) set thy desp'rate foote; more hell, more horror,
More wilde, remorseless rage shall seize on thee,
Then on a *Coniurer*, that had heed-lesse left,
His *Circles* saftie, ere his *Devill* was layd.
Then, here's a lock, which I will hang upon thee;
And, now I thinke on't, I will keepe thee back-wards;
Thy lodging shall bee back-wards: thy walkes back-wards;
Thy prospect—all be back-wards; and no pleasure,
That thou shalt know, but back-wards: Nay, since you force
My honest nature, know, it is your owne
Being to open, makes me use you thus:
Since you will not containe your subtill nostrills
In a sweete roome, but, they must snuffe the ayre
Of ranke, and sweaty passengers—One knocks.
Away, and be not scene, paine of thy life;
Not looke toward the windore: if thou dost—
(Nay stay, heare this) let me not prosper, Whore,
But I will make thee an *Anatomy*,
Dissect thee mine owne selfe, and read a *lecture*
Upon thee, to the citty, and in publique.
Away. Who's there?

SERVITORE.

'Tis Signior *Mosca*, Sir.

THE FOXE

ACT 2. SCENE 6.

CORVINO. MOSCA.

Let him come in, his master's dead : there's yet,
Some good, to helpe the bad. My *Mosca*, welcome ;
I gesse your newes.

MOSCA.

I feare, you cannot, Sir.

CORVINO.

Is't not his death?

MOSCA.

Rather, the contrary.

CORVINO.

Not his recovery?

MOSCA.

Yes, Sir.

CORVINO.

I am curst, I am bewitch'd, my crosses meete to vexe mee.
How? how? how? how?

MOSCA.

Why, Sir, with *Scoto's* oyle ;
Corbaccio, and *Voltore* brought of it,
Whilst I was busy in an inner roome——

CORVINO.

Death ! that damn'd *Montebanke* ; but, for the *Law*,
Now, I could kill the raskall : 't cannot bee,
His oyle should have that vertue. Ha' not I
Knowne him a common rogue, come fidling in
To th' *Osteria*, with a tumbling whore,
And, when he ha's done all his forc'd tricks, beene glad

THE FOXE

Of a poore spoonefull of dead wine, with flies in't?
It cannot bee. All his *ingredients*
Are a sheepes galle, a rosted bitches marrow,
Some fewe sod earewigs, pounded caterpillers,
A little capons grease, and fasting spitle:
I know 'hem, to a *dram*.

MOSCA.

I know not, Sir;
But some on't, there, they pour'd into his eares,
Some in his nostrills, and recover'd him;
Applying but the *fricace*.

CORVINO.

Pox o' that *fricace*.

MOSCA.

And since, to seeme the more officious
And flatt'ring of his health, there, they have had,
(At extreme fees) the *Colledge* of *Physitians*
Consulting on him, how they might restore him;
Where, one would have a *cataplasme* of spices,
Another a flead *Ape* clapt to his brest,
A third would ha'it a *Dog*, a fourth an *oyle*,
With wild *Catts* skinnes: At last, they all resolv'd
That, to preserve him, was no other meanes
But some young woman must be streight sought out,
Lusty, and full of iuice, to sleepe by him;
And, to this service (most unhappily,
And most unwillingly) am I now imploy'd,
Which, here, I thought to pre-acquaint you with,
For your advise, since it concernes you most,
Because, I would not do that thing might crosse
Your ends, on whom I have my whole dependance, Sir
Yet if I do it not, they may delate
My slacknesse to my Patron, worke me out
Of his opinion; and there, all your hopes,

THE FOXE

Venters, or whatsoever, are all frustrate.
I do but tell you, Sir. Besides, they are all
Now striving, who shall first present him. Therefore—
I could intreat you, breefly, conclude some-what :
Prevent 'hem if you can.

CORVINO.

Death to my hopes !
This is my villainous fortune ! Best to hire
Some common Curtezan ?

MOSCA.

I, I thought on that, Sir.
But they are all so subtle, full of art—
And age againe, doting, and flexible,
So as—I cannot tell—we may perchance
Light on a queane, may cheate us all.

CORVINO.

Tis true.

MOSCA.

No, no : it must be one, that has no tricks, Sir,
Some simple thing, a creature, made unto it ;
Some wench you may command. Ha' you no kinswoman ?
Gods so—Thinke, thinke, thinke, thinke, thinke, thinke, thinke, Sir.
One o' the *Doctors* offer'd, there, his daughter.

CORVINO.

How !

MOSCA.

Yes, Signior *Lupo*, the Physitian.

CORVINO.

His daughter ?

MOSCA.

And a virgin, Sir. Why ? Alasse,
He knowes the state of's body, what it is ;

THE FOXE

That nought can warme his bloud, Sir, but a *fever*;
Nor any incantation raise his spirit :
A long forgetfulnesse hath seiz'd that part.
Besides, Sir, who shall know it ? some one, or two.

CORVINO.

I pray thee give me leave : If any man
But I had had this luck—The thing in't selfe,
I know, is nothing—Wherefore should not I
As well command my bloud, and my affectionis,
As this dull *Doctor* ? In the point of honor,
The cases are all one, of wife, and daughter.

MOSCA.

I heare him comming.

CORVINO.

She shall doo't : 'Tis done.
Slight, if this *Doctor*, that is not engag'd,
Unlesse 't bee for his counsell (which is nothing)
Offer his daughter, what should I, that am
So deepely in ? I will prevent him, wretch !
Covetous wretch ! *Mosca*, I have determin'd.

MOSCA.

How, Sir ?

CORVINO.

Wee'll make all sure. The party, you wot of,
Shall be mine own wife, *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

Sir. The thing,
(But that I would not seeme to counsell you)
I should have motion'd to you at the first :
And, make your count, you have cut all their throtes.
Why ! 'Tis directly taking a possession !
And, in his next fit, we may let him go.
'Tis but to pul the pillow, from his head,

THE FOXE

And he is thratled : 't had beene done, before,
But for your scrupulous doubts.

CORVINO.

I, a plague on't,
My conscience fooles my wit. Well, Ile be briefe,
And so be thou, least they should be before us :
Go home, prepare him, tell him, with what zeale,
And willingnesse, I do it ; sweare it was,
On the first hearing, (as thou mayst do, truely)
Mine own free motion,

MOSCA.

Sir, I warrant you,
Ile so possesse him with it, that the rest
Of his sterv'd clients, shall be banisht, all ;
And only you receiv'd. But come not, Sir,
Untill I send, for I have something else
To ripen, for your good (you must not know't)

CORVINO.

But do not you forget to send, now.

MOSCA.

Feare not.

ACT 2. SCENE 7.

CORVINO. CELIA.

Where are you, wife ? my *Celia* ? wife ? What, blubbering ?
Come, drye those teares. I thinke, thou thought'st mee in earnest ?
Ha ? by this light, I talk'd so but to trie thee.
Me thinkes, the lightnesse of the occasion
Should ha' confirm'd thee. Come, I am not icalous.

CELIA.

No ?

THE FOXE

CORVINO.

Faith, I am not I, nor never was :
It is a poor, unprofitable humor.
Do not I know, if women have a will,
They'll doo 'gainst all the watches, o' the world ?
And that the feircest spies, are tam'd with gold ?
Tut, I am confident in thee, thou shalt see't :
And see, Ile give thee cause too, to beleeve it.
Come, kisse mee. Go, and make thee ready straight,
In all thy best attire, thy choicest iewells,
Put 'hem all on, and, with 'hem, thy best lookes :
We are invited to a solemne feast,
At old *Volpone's*, where it shall appeare.
How far I am free, from iealousie, or feare.

ACT 3. SCENE 1.

MOSCA.



OSCA.

I reare, I shall begin
to grow in love
With my deare selfe,
and my most pros-
p'rous parts,
They do so spring,
and burgeon ; I
can feele
A whimsey i' my
bloud : (I know
not how)
Successe hath made
me wanton. I
could skip
Out of my skinne,
now, like a subtile
snake,
I am so limber. O !
your *Parasite*
Is a most pretious
thing, dropt from
above,

Not bred 'mong'st clods, and clot-poules, here on earth.
I muse, the *Mysterie* was not made a *Science*,
It is so liberally profest ! Almost
All the wise world is little else, in nature,

THE FOXE

But *Parasites*, or *Sub-parasites*. And, yet
I meane not those, that have your bare *Towne-art*,
To know, who's fit to feede 'hem ; have no house,
No family, no care, and therefore mould
Tales for mens cares, to baite that sense ; or get
Kitchin-invention, and some stale receipts
To please the belly, and the groine ; nor those,
With their *Court-dog-trickes*, that can fawne, and fleere,
Make their revenue out of legges and faces,
Eccho my-*Lord*, and lick away a moath :
But your fine, elegant rascall, that can rise,
And stoope (almost together) like an arrow ;
Shoote through the aire, as nimbly as a starre ;
Turne short, as doth a swallow ; and be here,
And there, and here, and yonder, all at once ;
Present to any humour, all occasion ;
And change a visor, swifter, then a thought.
This is the creature, had the art borne with him ;
Toyles not to learne it, but doth practise it
Out of most excellent nature : And such sparkes
Are the true *Parasites*, others but their *Zanis*.

ACT 3. SCENE 2.

MOSCA. BONARIO.

Who's this? *Bonario*? old *Corbaccio's* sonne?
The person I was bound to seeke. Fayre Sir,
You are happ'ly met.

BONARIO.

That cannot be, by thee.

MOSCA.

Why, Sir?

THE FOXE

BONARIO.

Nay, 'pray thee know thy way, and leave me ;
I would be loth to inter-change discourse
With such a mate, as thou art.

MOSCA.

Curteous Sir, scorne not my poverty.

BONARIO.

Not I, by heaven,
But thou shalt give mee leave to hate thy basenesse.

MOSCA.

Basenesse ?

BONARIO.

I, Answer me : Is not thy sloth
Sufficient argument ? thy flattery ?
Thy meanes of feeding ?

MOSCA.

Heaven, be good to me.
These imputations are too common, Sir,
And eas'ly stuck on vertue, when shee's poore ;
You are unequall to me, and how ere
Your sentence may be righteous, yet you are not,
That ere you know me, thus, proceed in censure :
St. *Marke* bear witnesse 'gainst you, 'tis inhumane.

BONARIO.

What ? do's he weepe ? the signe is soft, and good :
I do repent mee, that I was so harsh.

MOSCA.

'Tis true, that, sway'd by strong necessity,
I am enforc'd to eate my carefull bread
With too much obsequy ; 'tis true, beside,
That I am faine to spin mine owne poore rayment,
Out of my mere observance, being not borne,

THE FOXE

To a free fortune : but that I have done
Base offices, in rending friends asunder,
Dividing families, betraying counsellors,
Whispering false lies, or mining men with praises,
Train'd their credulitie with perjuries,
Corrupted chastity, or am in love
With mine owne tender ease, but would not rather
Prove the most rugged, and laborious course,
That might redeeme, my present estimation ;
Let me here perish, in all hope of goodnesse.

BONARIO.

This cannot be a personated passion.
I was to blame, so to mistake thy nature ;
'Pray thee forgive mee : and speake out thy bus'nesse.

MOSCA.

Sir, it concernes you ; and though I may seeme,
At first, to make a maine offence, in manners,
And in my gratitude, unto my maister,
Yet, for the pure love, which I beare all right,
And hatred of the wrong, I must reveale it.
This very houre, your father is in purpose
To disinherit you——

BONARIO.

How ?

MOSCA.

And thrust you forth,
As a mere stranger to his bloud ; 'tis true, Sir :
The worke no way ingageth mee, but, as
I claime an interest in the generall state
Of goodnesse, and true vertue, which I heare
T' abound in you : and, for which mere respect,
Without a second ayme, Sir, I have done it.

BONARIO.

This tale hath lost thee much of the late trust,

THE FOXE

Thou hadst with me ; it is impossible :
I know not how to lend it any thought,
My father should be so unnaturall.

MOSCA.

It is a confidence, that well becomes
Your piety ; and form'd (no doubt) it is,
From your owne simple innocence : which makes
Your wrong more monstrous, and abhor'd. But, Sir,
I now, will tell you more. This very minute,
It is, or will be doing : And, if you
Shall be but pleas'd to goe with me, Ile bring you,
(I dare not say where you shall see, but) where
Your eare shall be a witnesse of the deed ;
Heare your selfe written *Bastard* ; and profest
The common issue of the earth.

BONARIO.

I'm maz'd.

MOSCA.

Sir, if I do it not, draw your iust sword,
And score your vengeance, on my front, and face ;
Marke me your villayne : You have too much wrong,
And I do suffer for you, Sir. My heart
Weepes bloud, in anguish——

BONARIO.

Lead. I follow thee.

ACT 3. SCENE 3.

VOLPONE. NANO. ANDROGYNO. CASTRONE.

Mosca stayes long, me thinkes. Bring forth your sports
And helpe, to make the wretched time more sweete.

THE FOXE

NANO.

*Dwarfe, Foole, and Eunuch, well mett here wee bee.
A question it were now, whether of us three,
Being, all, the knowne delicates, of a rich man,
In pleasing him, claime the precedency can?*

CASTRONE.

I claime for my selfe.

ANDROGYNO.

And, so doth the Foole.

NANO.

*Tis foolish indeed: let me set you both to schoole.
First, for your Dwarfe, hee's little, and witty,
And, everything, as it is little, is pritty;
Else, why do men say to a creature (of my shape)
So soone as they see him, it's a pritty little Ape?
And, why a pritty Ape? but for pleasing imitation
Of greater mens action, in a ridiculous fashion.
Beside, this feat body of mine doth not crave
Halfe the meat, drinke, and cloth, one of your bulkes will have.
Admit your Foole's face be the Mother of laughter,
Yet, for his braine, it must alwaies come after:
And, though that do feede him, it's a pittifull case,
His body is beholding to such a bad face.*

VOLPONE.

*Who's there? my couch, Away, looke Nano, see:
Give me my cappes first—go, enquire. Now, Cupid
Send it be Mosca, and with faire returne.*

NANO.

It is the beauteous madam——

VOLPONE.

Would-bee? is it?

NANO.

The same.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

Now, torment on mee ; squire her in :
For she will enter, or dwell here for ever.
Nay, quickly. That my fit were past. I feare
A second hell too, that my loathing this
Will quite expell my appetite to the other :
Would she were taking, now, her tedious leave.
Lord, how it threatens mee, what I am to suffer !

ACT 3. SCENE 4:

LADY. VOLPONE. NANO. WOMEN 2.

I thanke you, good Sir. 'Pray you signifie
Unto your Patron, I am here. This band
Shewes not my neck inough (I trouble you, Sir ;
Let me request you, bid one of my women
Come hether to mee). In good faith, I, am drest
Most favourably, to day, it is no matter,
'Tis well inough.

Looke, see, these petulant things,
How they have done this !

VOLPONE.

I do feeble the *Fever*
Ent'ring in at mine eares ; O, for a charme,
To fright it hence.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Come nearer : Is this curle
In his right place ? or this ? Why is this higher
Then all the rest ? You ha' not wash'd your eies, yet ?
Or do they not stand even i' your head ?
Where's your fellow ? call her.

THE FOXE

NANO.

Now, *St. Marke* deliver us : anone, she'll beate her women,
Because her nose is red.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I pray you, view

This tire, forsooth ; are all things apt, or no ?

1 WOMAN.

One haire a little, here, sticks out, forsooth.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Do's't so, forsooth ? and where was your deare sight,

When it did so, forsooth ? What now ? bird-eyd ?

And you, too ? 'pray you, both approach, and mend it,

Now (by that light) I muse yo' are not asham'd,

I, that have preach'd these things, so oft, unto you,

Read you the principles, argu'd all the grounds,

Disputed every fitnessse, every grace,

Call'd you to councell of so frequent dressings——

NANO.

(More carefully then of your fame, or honor.)

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Made you acquainted, what an ample dowry

The knowledge of these things would be unto you,

Able, alone, to get you *Noble* husbands

At your returne : and you, thus, to neglect it ?

Besides, you seeing what a curious *Nation*

Th' *Italians* are, what will they say of mee ?

The *English Lady* cannot dresse her selfe ;

Here's a fine imputation, to our Country :

Well, goe your waies, and stay, i' the next roome.

This *fucus* was too course too ; it's no matter.

Good-Sir, you'll give 'hem entertaynement ?

VOLPONE.

The storme comes toward me.

THE FOXE

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

How do's my *Volp.*?

VOLPONE.

Troubled with noyse, I cannot sleepe; I dreamt
That a strange *Fury* entered, now, my house,
And, with the dreadfull tempest of her breath,
Did cleave my roofe asunder.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Beleeve me, and I

Had the most fearefull dreame, could I remember 't——

VOLPONE.

Out on my fate; I ha' giv'n her the occasion
How to torment mee: she will tell me hers.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Me thought, the *golden Mediocrity*,
Polite, and delicate——

VOLPONE.

O, if you do love mee,
No more: I sweate, and suffer, at the mention
Of any dreame: feele how I tremble yet.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Alasse, good soule! the Passion of the heart.
Seede-pearle were good now, boild with *sirroppe* of *Apples*,
Tincture of Gold, and *Currall*, *Citron-Pills*,
Your *Elicampane* roote, *Myrobalanes*——

VOLPONE.

Ay me, I have tane a grasse hopper by the wing.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Burnt silke and *Amber*. You have *Muscadell*
Good i' the house——

VOLPONE.

You will not drinke, and part?

THE FOXE

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

No, feare not that. I doubt, wee shall not get
Some *English saffron* (halfe a *dram* would serve)
Your sixteene *Cloves*, a little *Muske*, dri'd *Mintes* ;
Buglosse, and *barley-meale*——

VOLPONE.

Shee's in againe.
Before I fayn'd diseases, now I have one.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

And these appli'd, with a right scarlet-cloth——

VOLPONE.

Another floud of words ! a very torrent !

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Shall I, Sir, make you a *Poultice* ?

VOLPONE.

No, no, no ;
I'm very well : you neede prescribe no more.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I have, a little, studied *Physick* ; but, now,
I'm all for *Musique*, save, i' the forenoones,
An houre, or two, for *Paynting*. I would have
A *Lady*, indeed, t' have all, *Letters*, and *Artes*,
Be able to discourse, to write, to paynt,
But principall (as *Plato* holds) your *Musique*
(And, so do's wise *Pythagoras*, I take it)
Is your true rapture ; when there is concent
In face, in voice, in clothes : and is, indeed,
Our sex's chiefest ornament.

VOLPONE.

The *Poet*
As old in time as *Plato*, and as knowing,
Say's that your highest female grace is *Silence*.

THE FOXE

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Which o' your *Poets*? *Petrarch*? or *Tasso*? or *Dante*?
Guarini? *Ariosto*? *Aretine*?
Cieco di Hadria? I have read them all.

VOLPONE.

Is everything a cause, to my distruction?

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I thinke I ha' two or three of 'hem, about mee.

VOLPONE.

The sunne, the sea will sooner, both, stand still,
Than her aeternall tongue; nothing can scape it.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Here's *Pastor-Fido*——

VOLPONE.

Professe obstinate silence,
That's, now, my safest.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

All our *English Writers*,
I meane such, as are happy in th' *Italian*,
Will deigne to steale out of this *Author*, mainely;
Almost as much, as from *Montagnié*;
He has so moderne, and facile a veine,
Fitting the time, and catching the *Court-eare*.
Your *Petrarch* is more passionate, yet he,
In dayes of *Sonnetting*, trusted 'hem, with much:
Dante is hard, and fewe can understand him.
But, for a desperate wit, there's *Aretine*;
Onely, his *pictures* are a little obscene——
You marke mee not.

VOLPONE.

Alasse, my mind's perturb'd.

THE FOXE

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Why, in such cases, we must cure ourselves.

Make use of our *Philosophie*——

VOLPONE.

O' ay mee.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

And as we finde our passions do rebell,
Encounter 'hem with reason ; or divert 'hem,
By giving scope unto some other humour
Of lesser danger : As, in *politique* bodyes,
There's nothing, more, doth overwhelme the iudgment,
And cloud the understanding, then too much
Setling, and fixing, and (as 'twere) subsiding
Upon one object. For the incorporating
Of these same outward things, into that part,
Which we call *mentall*, leaves some certaine *faeces*,
That stop the *organs*, and, as *Plato* sayes,
Assassinates our knowledge.

VOLPONE.

Now, the spirit
Of patience helpe mee.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Come, in faith, I must
Visit you more, a dayes ; and make you well :
Laugh, and be lusty.

VOLPONE.

My good *Angell* save mee.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

There was but one sole man, in all the world,
With whom I ere could sympathize ; and hee
Would lie you, often, three, foure houres together,
To heare me speake : and be (sometime) so rap't,
As he would answer mee, quite from the purpose,

THE FOXE

Like you, and you are like him, iust. Ile discourse
(An't be but only, Sir, to bring you asleepe)
How did we spend our time, and loves, together,
For some six yeares

VOLPONE.

Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

For we were *Coætanei*, and brought up——

VOLPONE.

Some power, some fate, some fortune rescue mee.

ACT 3. SCENE 5.

MOSCA. LADY. VOLPONE.

God save you, *Madam*.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Good sir.

VOLPONE.

Mosca ? welcome, welcome to my redemption.

MOSCA.

Why, Sir ?

VOLPONE.

Oh, rid me of this my torture, quickly, there ;
My *Madam*, with the everlasting voyce :
The Bells, in time of pestilence, nêre made
Like noyse, or were in that perpetuall motion ;
The Cock-pit comes not neare it. All my house,
But now, steam'd like a bath, with her thicke breath.
A *Lawyer* could not have beene heard ; nor scarce
Another Woman, such a hayle of words
She has let fall. For hells sake, ridd her hence.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Has she presented?

VOLPONE.

Oh, I do not care,
He take her absence, upon any price,
With any losse.

MOSCA.

Madam.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I ha' brought your Patron
A toy, a cap here, of mine owne worke——

MOSCA.

Tis well. I had forgot to tell you, I saw your Knight,
Where you'd little thinke it——

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Where?

MOSCA.

Marry, where yet, if you make hast, you may apprehend him,
Rowing upon the water in a *gondole*,
With the most cunning Curtizan of *Venice*.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Is't true?

MOSCA.

Pursue 'hem, and beleeeve your eyes :
Leave mee, to make your gift.
I knew, 'twould take.
For, lightly, they, that use themselves most licence
Are still most icalous.

VOLPONE.

Mosca, hearty, thanks,
For thy quick fiction, and delivery of mee.
Now, to my hopes, what saist thou?

THE FOXE

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

But do you heare, Sir?

VOLPONE.

Againe; I feare a *paroxisme*.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Which way row'd they together?

MOSCA.

Toward the *Rialto*.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I pray you, lend me your *Dwarfe*.

MOSCA.

I pray you, take him——

Your hopes, Sir, are like happy blossomes, fayre,

And promise timely fruit, if you will stay

But the maturing; keepe you, at your couch,

Corbaccio will arrive straight, with the Will:

When he is gone, Ile tell you more.

VOLPONE.

My bloud, my spirits are return'd; I am alive:

And, like your wanton gam'ster, at *Primero*,

Whose thought had whisper'd to him *not go lesse*,

Me thinkes I lie, and drawe——for an encounter.

ACT 3. SCENE 6.

MOSCA. BONARIO.

Sir, here conceal'd you may heare all. But 'pray you,

Have patience, Sir—the same's your father, knocks:

I am compeld to leave you.

BONARIO.

Do so. Yet, cannot my thought imagine this a truth.

THE FOXE

ACT 3. SCENE 7.

MOSCA. CORVINO. CELIA. BONARIO. VOLPONE.

Death on me! you are come to soone, what meant you?
Did not I say, I would send?

CORVINO.

Yes, but I feard you might forget it, and then they prevent us.

MOSCA.

Prevent? Did ere man hast so, for his hornes?

A *Courtier* would not ply it so, for a place.

Well, now there's no helping it, stay here;

Ile presently returne.

CORVINO.

Where are you, *Celia*?

You know not, wherefore I have brought you hether?

CELIA.

Not well, except you told mee.

CORVINO.

Now, I will: harke hether.

MOSCA.

Sir, your father hath sent word,

It will be halfe an houre, ere he come;

And therefore, if you please to walke, the while,

Into that gallery—at the upper end,

There are some bookes to entertaine the time:

And Ile take care, no man shall come unto you, Sir.

BONARIO.

Yes, I will stay there; I do doubt this fellow.

MOSCA.

There; he is farre enough: he can heare nothing:

And, for his father, I can keepe him of.

THE FOXE

CORVINO.

Nay, now, there is no starting back ; and therefore,
Resolve upon it : I have so decre'd.
It must be done. Nor, would I move't afore,
Because I would avoyd all shifts and tricks,
That might deny mee.

CELIA.

Sir, let mee beseech you,
Affect not these strange trialls ; if you doubt
My chastity, why lock me up, for ever :
Make me the heyre of darkenesse. Let me live,
Where I may please yours feares, if not your trust.

CORVINO.

Beleeve it, I have no such humor, I.
All that I speake I meane ; yet I am not mad :
Not horne-mad, see you ? Go too, shew your selfe
Obedient, and a wife.

CELIA.

O heaven !

CORVINO.

I say it, do so.

CELIA.

Was this the traine ?

CORVINO.

I'have told you reasons ;
What the *Phisitions* have set downe ; how much,
It may concerne mee ; what my ingagements are ;
My meanes ; and the necessity of those meanes,
For my recovery : wherefore, if you bee
Loyall, and mine, be wonne, respect my venture.

CELIA.

Before your honour ?

THE FOXE

CORVINO.

Honour? tut, a breath;
There's no such thing, in nature: a mere terme
Invented to awe fooles. What is my gold
The worse, for touching? clothes, for being look'd on?
Why, this's no more. An old, decrepite wretch,
That ha's no sense, no sinewe; takes his meate
With others fingers; onely knowes to gape,
When you do scald his gummes; a voice; a shadow;
And, what can this man hurt you?

CELIA.

Lord! what spirit is this hath entred him?

CORVINO.

And for your fame,
That's such a *ligge*; as if I would go tell it,
Crie it, on the *Piazza*! who shall know it?
But hee, that cannot speake it; and this fellow,
Whose lippes are i' my pocket: save yourselfe,
If you'll proclaime't, you may. I know no other,
Should come to knowe it.

CELIA.

Are heaven and, *Saints* then nothing?
Will they be blind, or stupide?

CORVINO.

How?

CELIA.

Good Sir, be icalous stil, æmulate them; and thinke
What hate they burne with, toward every sinne,

CORVINO.

I graunt you; if I thought it were a sinne,
I would not urge you. Should I offer this
To some young *Frenchman*, or hot *Tuscane* bloud,
That had read *Aretine*, conned all his *printes*,

THE FOXE

Knew every quirke within lusts *Laborinth*,
And were profest *Critique*, in lechery ;
And I would looke upon him, and applaud him,
This were a sinne : but here, tis contrary,
A pious worke, mere charity, for Physick,
And honest politie, to assure mine owne.

CELIA.

O heaven ; canst thou suffer such a change ?

VOLPONE.

Thou art mine honor, *Mosca*, and my pride,
My ioy, my tickling, my delight : go bring 'hem.

MOSCA.

Please you drawe neare, Sir.

CORVINO.

Come on, what——

You will not be rebellious ? by that light——

MOSCA.

Sir, signior *Corvino*, here, is come to see you,

VOLPONE.

Oh.

MOSCA.

And, hearing of the consultation had,
So lately, for you health, is come to offer,
Or rather, Sir, to prostitute——

CORVINO.

Thankes, sweete *Mosca*,

MOSCA.

Freely, un-ask'd, or un-intreated——

CORVINO.

Well.

MOSCA.

(As the true, fervent instance of his love)

THE FOXE

His owne most faire, and proper wife ; the beauty,
Onely of price, in *Venice*——

CORVINO.

'Tis well urg'd.

MOSCA.

To bee your comfortresse, and to preserve you.

VOLPONE.

Alasse, I am past already. 'Pray you, thanke 'him
For his good care, and promptnesse. But for that,
Tis a vaine labour, eene to fight, 'gainst heaven ;
Applying fire to a stone : (uh, uh, uh, uh)
Making a 'dead leafe grow againe. I take
His wishes gently, though ; and, you may tell him
What I have done for him : Mary, my state is hopelesse.
Will him, to pray for mee ; and t'use his fortune,
With reverence, when he comes to it.

MOSCA.

Do you heare, Sir ?
Go to him, with your wife.

CORVINO.

Heart of my father !
Wilt thou persist thus ? Come, I pray thee, come.
Thou seest 'tis nothing : *Celia*. By this hand,
I shall grow violent. Come, do't, I say.

CELIA.

Sir, kill mee, rather : I will take downe poyson,
Eate burning coales, do anything——

CORVINO.

Be damn'd. (Heart) I will drag thee hence, home by the haire ;
Cry thee a strumpet, through the streetes ; rip up
Thy mouth, unto thine eares ; and slit thy nose,
Like a raw rotchet—Do not tempt mee, come,
Yeld, I am loth—(Death) I will buy some slave,

THE FOXE

Whom I will kill, and binde thee to him, alive ;
And, at my windore, hang you forth : devising
Some monstrous crime, which I, in CAPITAL letters,
Will eate into thy flesh, with *Aqua-fortis*,
And burning corsives, on this stubborne brest.
Now, by the bloud, thou hast incens'd, Ile doo't.

CELIA.

Sir, what you please, you may, I am your *Martyr*.

CORVINO.

Bee not thus obstinate, I ha' not deserv'd it :
Thinke, who it is, intreats you. 'Pray thee, sweete ;
(Good faith) thou shalt have iewells, gownes, attires,
What thou' wilt thinke, and aske. Do, but, goe kisse him.
Or touch him, but. For my sake. At my sute,
This once. No ? Not ? I shall remember this,
Will you disgrace mee, thus ? Do' you thirst my' undoing ?

MOSCA.

Nay, gentle Lady, bee advis'd.

CORVINO.

No, no.
She has watch'd her time. God's precious—this is skirvy ;
'Tis very skirvie : And you are——

MOSCA.

Nay, good Sir.

CORVINO.

An errant *Locust*, by heaven, a Locust.
Whore, *Crocodile*, that hast thy teares prepar'd,
Expecting how, thou'lt bid them flow——

MOSCA.

Nay, 'pray you, Sir. Shee will consider.

CELIA.

Would my life would serve
To satisfie——

THE FOXE

CORVINO.

(S'death) if she would but speake to him,
And save my reputation, 'twere somewhat ;
But, spightfully to affect my utter ruine :

MOSCA.

I, now you' have put your fortune, in her hands.
Why i'faith, it is her modesty, I must quit her.
If you were absent, shee would be more comming ;
I know it : and dare undertake for her.
What woman can, before her husband ? 'pray you,
Let us departe, and leave her, here.

CORVINO.

Sweete *Celia*,
Thou mayst redeeme all yet ; Ile say no more :
If not, esteeme yourselfe as lost,—Nay, stay there.

CELIA.

O *God*, and his good *Angells* ! whether, whether,
Is shame fled humane brests ? that, with such ease,
Men dare put off your honors, and their owne ?
Is that, which ever was a cause of life,
Now plac'd beneath the basest circumstance ?
And modesty an exile made, for money ?

VOLPONE.

I, in *Corvino*, and such earth-fed mindes,
That never tasted the true heav'n of love.
Assure thee, *Celia*, he that would sell thee,
Onely for hope of gaine, and that uncertaine,
He would have sold his part of *Paradise*
For ready money, had he met a Cope-man.
Why art thou maz'd, to see me thus reviv'd ?
Rather, applaud thy beauties miracle ;
'Tis thy great worke : that hath, not now alone,
But sundry times 'rays'd mee, in severall shapes,

THE FOXE

And, but this morning, like a *Mountebanke*,
To see thee at thy windore. I, before
I would have left my practise, for thy love,
In varying figures, I would have contended
With the blew *Proteus*, or the horned *Floud*.
Now, art thou welcome.

CELIA.

Sir.

VOLPONE.

Nay, flie mee not ;
Nor, let thy false imagination
That I was bedrid, make thee thinke, I am so :
Thou shalt not find it. I am now, as fresh,
As hot, as high, and in as *Ioviall* plight,
As, when (in that so celebrated *Scene*,
At recitation of our *Comædie*,
For entertayment of the great *Valoys*)
I acted young *Antinoüs* ; and attracted
The eyes, and cares of all the *Ladies*, present,
T' admire each gracefull gesture, note, and footing.

SONG

*Come, my Celia, let us prove,
While we can, the sports of love ;
Time will not be ours, for ever,
He, at length, our good will sever ;
Spend not then his guiftes, in vaine.
Sunnes, that set, may rise againe :
But if, once, we loose this light,
'Tis with us perpetuall night.
Why should wee deferre our joyes ?
Fame, and rumor are but toyes.
Cannot wee delude the eyes
Of a few poore household-spies ?*

THE FOXE

*Or his easier cares beguile,
Thus remooved, by our wile?
Tis no sinne, loves fruicts to steale ;
But the sweete thefts to reveale :
To be taken, to be seene,
These have crimes accounted beene.*

CELIA.

Some *serene* blast me, or dire lightning strike
This my offending face.

VOLPONE.

Why droopes my *Celia* ?
Thou hast, in place of a base husband, found
A worthy lover : use thy fortune well,
With secrecy, and pleasure. See, behold,
What thou art *Queene* of ; not in expectation,
As I feede others : but possess'd, and crown'd.
See, here, a rope of pearle ; and each, more *orient*
Than the brave *Ægyptian Queene* carrous'd :
Dissolve, and drink 'hem. See, a Carbuncle,
May put out both the eyes of our *St. Marke*. ;
A Diamant would have bought *Lollia Paulina*,
When she came in, like star-light, hid with iewells,
That were the spoyles of *Provinces* ; take these,
And weare, and loose 'hem : Yet, remains an Eare-ring
To purchase them againe, and this whole *State*.
A Gem, but worth a private patrimony,
Is nothing : we will eate such at a meale.
The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingalles,
The braynes of peacocks, and of estriches
Shall be our foode : and, could we get the phoenix,
(Though *Nature* lost her kind) she were our dish.

CELIA.

Good Sir, these things might move a minde affected
With such delights ; but I, whose innocence

THE FOXE

Is all I can thinke wealthy, or worth th' enjoying,
And, which once lost, I have nought to lose beyond it,
Cannot be taken with these sensuall baytes :
If you have conscience——

VOLPONE.

'Tis the beggar's vertue,
If thou hast wisdom, heare me, *Celia*.
Thy bathes shall be the iuyce of *Iuly*-flowers,
Spirit of roses, and of violets,
The milke of unicornes, and panthers breath
Gather'd in bagges, and mixt with *Cretan* wines.
Our drinke shall be prepared gold, and amber ;
Which we will take, untill my roofo whirll round
With the *vertigo* : and my *Dwarfe* shall dance,
My *Eunuch* sing, my *Foole* make up the *antique*,
Whilst, we, in changed shapes, act *Ovids* tales,
Thou, like *Europa* now, and I like *Iove*,
Then I like *Mars*, and thou like *Erycine*,
So, of the rest, till we have quite run through,
And weary'd all the *fables* of the *Gods*.
Then will I have thee, in more moderne formes,
Attired like some sprightly Dame of *France*,
Brave *Tuscan* Lady, or proud *Spanish* Beautie ;
Sometimes, unto the *Persian Sophies* wife ;
Or the *grand-Signiors* Mistresse, and, for change,
To one of our most arte-full *Curtezans*,
Or some quick *Negro*, or cold *Russian* ;
And I will meete thee, in as many shapes :
Where we may, so, trans-fuse our wandring soules
Out at our lippes, and score up summes of pleasures,

*That the curious shall not know
How to tell them, as they flow ;
And the envious, when they find
What their number is, be pind.*

THE FOXE

CELIA.

If you have eares, that will be pierc'd—or eyes,
That can be open'd—a heart, may be touched—
Or any part, that yet sounds *man*, about you—
If you have touch of holy *Saints*—or *Heaven*—
Do mee the grace to let me 'scape—if not,
Be bountifull and kill mee, you do knowe,
I am a creature, hether ill betray'd,
By one, whose shame I would forget it were—
If you will daigne mee neither of these graces,
Yet feede your wrath, Sir, rather than your lust—
(It is a vice, comes nearer manlinesse)
And punish that unhappy crime of nature,
Which you miscall my beauty. Flea my face,
Or poison it, with oyntments, for seducing
Your bloud to this rebellion—Rub these hands,
With what may cause an eating leprosie,
E'ene to my bones, and marrow—Anything
That may dis-favour mee, save in my honour—
And I will kneele to you, 'pray for you, pay downe
A thousand howrely vowes, Sir, for your health—
Report, and thinke you vertuous——

VOLPONE.

Thinke me cold,
Frozen, and impotent, and so report me?
That I had *Nestor's hernia*, thou wouldst thinke.
I do degenerate, and abuse my *Nation*,
To play with opportunity, thus long:
I should have done the act, and then have parlee'd.
Yeeld, or Ile force thee.

CELIA.

O, just God.

VOLPONE.

In vaine——

THE FOXE

BONARIO.

Forbeare, foule ravisher, libidinous swine,
Free the forc'd lady, or thou dy'st, Impostor.
But that I am loth to snatch thy punishment
Out of the hand of *Iustice*, thou shouldst, yet,
Be made the timely sacrifice of vengeance,
Before this *Altar*, and this drosse, thy *Idoll*.
Lady, lets quit the place, it is the den
Of villany ; feare nought, you have a guard :
And he, ere long, shall meete his iust reward.

VOLPONE.

Fall on mee, rooffe, and bury mee in ruine,
Become my grave, that wert my shelter. O,
I am un-masqu'd, un-spirited, un-done,
Betray'd to beggary, to infamy——

ACT 3. SCENE 8.

MOSCA. VOLPONE.

Where shall I runne, most wretched shame of men,
To beate out my un-luckie braines?

VOLPONE.

Here, here.
What? dost thou bleede?

MOSCA.

O, that his well-driv'n sword
Had been so curteous, to have cleft me downe,
Unto the navill, ere I liv'd to see
My life, my hopes, my spirits, my Patron, all
Thus desperately engaged, by my error.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

Woe, on thy fortune.

MOSCA.

And my follies, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Thou hast made mee miserable.

MOSCA.

And my selfe, Sir,

Who would have thought, he would have harken'd, so?

VOLPONE.

What shall wee doe?

MOSCA.

I know not, if my heart

Could expiate the mischance, Il'd pluck it out.

Will you be pleas'd to hang mee? or cut my throate?

And Ile requite you, Sir. Let's die like *Romanes*,

Since wee have liv'd, like *Grecians*.

VOLPONE.

Hearke, who's there?

I heare some footing, Officers, the *Saffi*,

Come to apprehend us! I do feele the brand

Hissing, already, at my fore-head: now

Mine cares are boring.

MOSCA.

To your couch, Sir, you

Make that place good, however.

Guilty men suspect, what they deserve still. Signior *Corbaccio*!

THE FOXE

ACT 3. SCENE 9.

CORBACCIO. MOSCA. VOLTORE. VOLPONE.

Why! how now? *Mosca!*

MOSCA.

O, undone, amaz'd, Sir.
Your sonne (I know not, by what accident)
Acquainted with your purpose, to my Patron,
Touching your Will, and making him your heire;
Entred our house with violence, his sword drawne,
Sought for you, call'd you wretch, unnaturall,
Vow'd he would kill you.

CORBACCIO.

Mee?

MOSCA.

Yes, and my Patron.

CORBACCIO.

This act, shall disinherit him indeed:
Here is the Will.

MOSCA.

'Tis well, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Right, and well.
Be you as carefull now, for me.

MOSCA.

My life, Sir, is not more tenderd, I am onely yours.

CORBACCIO.

How do's he? will hee die shortly, think'st thou?

MOSCA.

I feare he'll out-last *May*.

THE FOXE

CORBACCIO.

To-day ?

MOSCA.

No, last-out *May*, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Couldst thou not gi' him a *dram* ?

MOSCA.

O by no meanes, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Nay, Ile not bid you.

VOLTORE.

This 's a knave, I see.

MOSCA.

How, Signior *Voltore* ! did he heare mee ?

VOLTORE.

Parasite.

MOSCA.

Who's that ? O, Sir, most timely welcome——

VOLTORE.

Scarce, to the discovery of your tricks I feare.

You are his, onely ? and mine, also ? are you not ?

MOSCA.

Who ? I, Sir ?

VOLTORE.

You, Sir. What devise is this about a Will ?

MOSCA.

A plot for you, Sir.

VOLTORE.

Come, put not your foysts upon me ; I shall scent 'hem.

MOSCA.

Did you not heare it ?

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

Yes, I heare, *Corbaccio*
Hath made your Patron, there, his heire.

MOSCA.

Tis true, by my devise, drawne to it by my plot,
With hope——

VOLTORE.

Your Patron should reciprocate?
And, you have promis'd?

MOSCA.

For your good, I did, Sir.
Nay, more, I told his sonne, brought, hid him here,
Where he might heare his father passe the deed;
Being perswaded to it, by this thought, Sir,
That the unnaturallnesse, first, of the act,
And then, his fathers oft disclayming in him,
Which I did meane t' help on, would sure enrage him
To do some violence upon his parent,
On which the *Law* should take sufficient hold,
And you be stated in a double hope:
Truth be my comfort, and my conscience,
My onely ayme was, to dig you a fortune
Out of these two, old, rotten Sepulchers——

VOLTORE.

I cry thee mercy *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

Worth your patience,
And your great merit, Sir. And, see the change!

VOLTORE.

Why? what successe?

MOSCA.

Most haplesse! you must helpe, Sir.

THE FOXE

Whilst wee expected th' old Raven, in comes
Corvino's wife, sent hether, by her husband——

VOLTORE.

What, with a present ?

MOSCA.

No, Sir, on visitation ;
(He telle you how, anone) and, staying long,
The youth, hee growes impatient, rushes forth,
Seizeth the lady, wound's mee, makes her sweare
(Or, he would murder her, that was his vow)
T' affirme my Patron would have done her rape :
Which how unlike it is, you see ! and, hence,
With that pretext hee's gone, t' accuse his father,
Defame my Patron ; defeate you——

VOLTORE.

Where's her husband ?

Let him bee sent for, streight.

MOSCA.

Sir, He go fetch him.

VOLTORE.

Bring him to the *Scrutineo*.

MOSCA.

Sir, I will.

VOLTORE.

This must be stopt.

MOSCA.

O, you do nobly, Sir.

Alasse, twas labor'd all, Sir, for your good ;

Nor was there want of councell, in the plot :

But fortune can, at any time, orethrow

The proiects of a hundred learned *Clearkes*, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

What's that ?

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

Wilt please you, Sir, to go along ?

MOSCA.

Patron, go in, and pray for our successe.

VOLPONE.

Need makes devotion : Heaven your labor blesse.

ACT 4. SCENE 1.

POLITIQUE. PEREGRINE.



SIR POLITIQUE
WOULD-BEE.

I told you, Sir, it
was a plot : you
see

What observation is.
You mention'd
mee

For some instruc-
tions : I will tell
you, Sir,

(Since we are met,
here, in this *height*
of *Venice*,)

Some few perticu-
lars, I have set
downe,

Onely for this *meri-
dian*; fit to be
knowne

Of your crude Travailer, and they are these.
I will not touch, Sir, at your *phrase*, or clothes,
For they are old.

PEREGRINE.

Sir, I have better.

THE FOXE

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Pardon, I meant, as they are *Theames*,

PEREGRINE.

O, Sir, proceed : Ile slander you no more of wit, good Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

First, for your *garbe*, it must be grave, and serious,
Very reserv'd, and lock't ; not tell a secret,
On any termes, not to your father ; scarce
A *fable*, but with caution ; make sure choise
Both of your company, and discourse ; beware
You never speake a truth——

PEREGRINE.

How ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Not to *strangers*,
For those be they, you must converse with, most ;
Others I would not know, Sir, but, at distance,
So as I still might be a saver, in 'hem :
You shall have tricks, else, past upon you, hourly.
And then, for your *Religion*, professe none,
But wonder, at the diversity of all ;
And, for your part, protest, were there no other
But simply the *Lawes* o' th' *Land*, you could content you :
Nic: Machiavell, and *Monsieur Bodine*, both
Were of this minde. Then, must you learne the use,
And handling of your silver forke, at meales,
The mettall of your glasse—These are maine matters
With your *Italian*, and to know the hower,
When you must eat your *melons*, and your *figges*.

PEREGRINE.

Is that a point of *State*, too ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Here it is, for your *Venetian*, if hee see a man

THE FOXE

Preposterous, in the least, he has him straight ;
Hee has : hee strippes him, Ile acquaint you, Sir,
I now have liv'd here ('Tis some fourteene monthes)
Within the first weeke, of my landing here,
All tooke me for a Citizen of *Venice* :
I knew the formes, so well——

PEREGRINE.

And nothing else.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I had read *Contarene*, tooke mee a house,
Dealt with my *Jewes*, to furnish it with moveables—
Well, if I could but find one man—one man,
To mine owne heart, whom I durst trust—I would—

PEREGRINE.

What ? what, Sir ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Make him rich ; make him a fortune :
He should not thinke, againe. I would command it.

PEREGRINE.

As how ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

With certaine proiects, that I have :
Which, I may not discover.

PEREGRINE.

If I had but one to wager with, I would lay odds, now,
Hee tells me, instantly.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

One is, (and that
I care not greatly, who knowes,) to serve the *State*
Of *Venice*, with red herrings, for three yeares,
And at a certaine, rate, from *Roterdam*;

THE FOXE

Where I have correspondence. There's a letter,
Sent me from one o' th' *States*, and to that purpose ;
He cannot write his name, but that's his *marke*.

PEREGRINE.

He is a Chaundler ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

No, a Cheesemonger.

There are some other two, with whome I treate
About the same negotiation ;
And—I will undertake it : For, tis thus,
He do't with ease, I have cast it all. Your hoigh
Carries but three men in her, and a boy ;
And she shall make me three returnes, a yeare :
So, if there come but one of three, I save,
If two, I can defalke : But, this is now,
If my mayne proiect faile.

PEREGRINE.

Then, you have others ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I should be loth to draw the subtill ayre
Of such a place, without my thousand aymes.
He not dissemble, Sir, where ere I come,
I love to be considerative ; and, 'tis true,
I have at my free houres, thought upon
Some certaine *Goods*, unto the *State of Venice*,
Which I do call my Cautions : and, Sir, which
I meane (in hope of pension) to propound
To the Great *Councell*, then unto the *Forty*,
So to the *Ten*. My meanes are made already——

PEREGRINE.

By whome ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir, one, that though his place b'obscure,

THE FOXE

Yet, he can sway, and they will heare him. H'is
A *Commandadore*.

PEREGRINE.

What, a common *sergeant*?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir, such as they are, put it in their mouthes,
What they should say, sometimes : as well as greater.
I thinke I have my *notes*, to shew you——

PEREGRINE.

Good, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

But, you shall sweare unto mee, on your gentry,
Not to anticipate——

PEREGRINE.

I, Sir?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Nor reveale a circumstance- -My paper is not with mee.

PEREGRINE.

O, but, you can remember, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

My first is concerning Tinder-boxes. You must know,
No family is, here, without it's boxe ;
Now, Sir, it being so portable a thing,
Put case, that you, or I were ill affected
Unto the *State* : Sir, with it, in our pockets,
Might not I go into the *Arsenale* ?
Or you? come out againe? and none the wiser?

PEREGRINE.

Except your selfe, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Go too, then. I, therefore,
Advertise to the *State*, how fit it were,

THE FOXE

That none, but such as were knowne *Patriots*,
Sound lovers of their country, should be suffer'd
T' enjoy them in their houses : And, even those,
Seald, at some office, and at such a bignesse,
As might not lurke in pockets.

PEREGRINE.

Admirable !

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

My next is, how t'enquire, and be resolv'd,
By present demonstration, whether a Ship,
Newly arrived from *Soria*, or from
Any suspected part of all the *Levant*,
Be guilty of the *Plague* : And, where they use
To lie out forty, fifty dayes, sometimes,
About the *Lazaretto*, for their triall ;
Ile save that charge, and losse unto the merchant,
And, in an houre, cleare the doubt.

PEREGRINE.

Indeede, Sir ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Or—I will loose my labour.

PEREGRINE.

'My faith, that's much.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Nay, Sir, conceive me. 'Twill cost mee, in onions,
Some thirty *Liv'res*——

PEREGRINE.

Which is one pound *sterling*.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Beside my water-workes : For this I do, Sir.
First, I bring in your ship, 'twixt two brickwalles ;
(But those the *State* shall venter) on the one
I straine me a fayre tarre-paulin ; and, in that,

THE FOXE

I stick my onions, cut in halves : the other
Is full of loope-holes, out at which, I thrust
The noses of my bellowes ; and, those bellowes
I keepe, with water-workes, in perpetuall motion,
(Which is the easi'st matter of a hundred.)
Now, Sir, your onion, which doth naturally
Attract th' infection, and your bellowes, blowing
The aire upon him, will shew (instantly)
By his chang'd colour, if there be contagion ;
Or else, remaine as faire, as at the first :
Now 'tis knowne, 'tis nothing.

PEREGRINE.

You are right, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I would, I had my note.

PEREGRINE.

'Faith, so would I :

But you ha' done well, for once, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Were I false, or would be made so, I could shew you reasons
How I could sell this *State*, now, to the *Turke*,
Spite of their *Galleys*, or their——

PEREGRINE.

Pray you, Sir *Poll*.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I have 'hem not, about mee.

PEREGRINE.

That I fear'd. They 'are there, Sir ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

No. This is my *Diary*,

Wherein I note my actions of the day.

THE FOXE

PEREGRINE.

'Pray you, let's see, Sir. What is here? *Notandum*,
"A Rat had gnawne my spur-lethers; notwithstanding,
I put on new, and did go forth: but, first,
I threw three beanes over the threshold. *Item*,
I went, and bought two tooth-pickes, whereof one
I burst, immediately, in a discourse
With a *dutch* merchant, 'bout *Ragion del stato*.
From him, I went, and payd a *moccinigo*,
For peeing my silke stockings; by the way
I cheapend sprats: and at *St. Markes*, I urin'd."
'Faith, these are politique notes!

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir, I do slippe no action of my life, thus, but I quote it.

PEREGRINE.

Belceve me, it is wise!

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Nay, Sir, read forth.

ACT 4. SCENE 2.

LADY. NANO. WOMEN. POLITIQUE. PEREGRINE.

Where should this loose Knight be, trow? sure h'is hous'd.

NANO.

Why, then, he's *fast*.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I, he plaies both, with mee:

I pray you, stay. This heate will do more harme

To my complexion, then his heart is worth;

(I do not care to hinder, but to take him.)

How it comes of!

THE FOXE

WOMAN.

My maister's yonder.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Where?

WOMAN.

With a yong Gentleman.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

That same's the party,

In mans apparell. 'Pray you, Sir, iog my Knight :

I will be tender to his reputation,

However he demerit.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

My lady !

PEREGRINE.

Where ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

'Tis shee, indeed, Sir ; you shall know her. She is,

Were she not mine, a *Lady* of that merite,

For fashion, and behaviour ; and for beauty

I durst compare——

PEREGRINE.

It seemes you are not iealous,

That dare commend her.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Nay, and for discourse——

PEREGRINE.

Being your wife, shee cannot misse that.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Madame, here is a Gentleman, 'pray you, use him, fayrely ;

He seemes a youth, but he is——

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

None ?

THE FOXE

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Yes, one has put his face, as soone into the world——

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

You meane, as early? but to day?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

How's this?

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Why, in this habit, Sir, you apprehend mee.

Well, *Mr Would-bee*, this doth not become you;

I had thought, the odour, Sir, of your good name,

Had beene more precious to you; that you would not

Have done this dire massacre, on your honour;

One of your gravitie, and ranke, besides:

But, *Knights*, I see, care little for the oath

They make to *Ladies*; chiefly, their owne *Ladies*.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Now, by my spurres (the *Symbole* of my *Knight-hood*).

PEREGRINE.

(Lord! how his brayne is humbled, for an oath)

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I reach you not.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Right, Sir, your *politie*

May beare it through, thus. Sir, a word with you.

I would be loth to, contest, publicly,

With any Gentlewoman; or to seeme

Froward, or violent (as the *Courtier* sayes)

It comes too neare rusticity, in a *Lady*,

Which I would shun, by all meanes: and, how-ever

I may deserve from *Mr Would-bee*, yet

T'have one fayre Gentlewoman, thus, be made

Th' unkind instrument, to wrong another,

And one she knowes not; I, and to persever,

THE FOXE

In my poore iudgement, is not warranted
From being a *solécisme* in our sexe,
If not in manners.

PEREGRINE.

How is this !

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sweete Madame, come nearer to your ayme.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Mary, and will, Sir.

Since you provoke me, with your impudence,
And laughter of your light land-Syren, here,
Your *Sporus*, your *Hermaphrodite*——

PEREGRINE.

What's here ?

Poétique fury, and *Historique* stormes ?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

The Gentleman, beleeve it, is of worth,
And of our *Nation*.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I, your *white-Friars nation* ?

Come, I blush for you, *Mr. Would-bee*, I ;

And am asham'd, you should ha' no more forehead,

Then, thus, to be the Patron, or *Saint George*

To a lewd harlot, a base *fricatrice*,

A female devill, in a male out-side.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Nay, an you be such a one ! I must bid, *adieu*

To your delights. The case appears too liquide.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I, you may carry't cleare, with your *State-face* ;

But for your *Carnivale Concupiscence*,

Who here is fled, for liberty of conscience,

THE FOXE

From furious persecution of the *Marshall*,
Her will I disc'ple.

PEREGRINE.

This is *fine*, I' faith !
And do you use this, often ? Is this part
Of your wits exercise, 'gainst you have occasion ?
Madam——

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Go to, Sir.

PEREGRINE.

Do you heare mee, *Lady* ?
Why, if your *Knight* have set you to begge shirts,
Or to invite me home, you might have done it
A nearer way by farre.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

This cannot worke you, out of my snare.

PEREGRINE.

Why ? am I in it, then ?
Indeede, your husband told mee you were fayre,
And so you are ; onely, your nose enclines
(That side, that's next the Sunne), to the *Queene-apple*.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

This cannot be indured by any patience.

ACT 4. SCENE 3.

MOSCA. LADY. PEREGRINE.

What's the matter, Madame ?

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

If the *Senate* right not my quest, in this ; I will protest 'hem
To all the world, no *Aristocrayce*

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

What is the iniurie, Lady ?

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Why, the caller ?

You told mee of, here I have tâne disguis'd.

MOSCA.

Who ? this ? What meanes your Ladiship ? The creature
I mentioned to you, is apprehended, now,
Before the *Senate*, you shall see her——

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Where ?

MOSCA.

Ile bring you to her. This young Gentleman,
I saw him land, this morning, at the *Port*.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Is't possible ! how has my iudgement wander'd ?
Sir, I must, blushing, say to you, I have err'd :
And plead your pardon.

PEREGRINE.

What ! more changes, yet ?

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I hope, you ha' not the malice to remember
A Gentlewomans passion. If you stay,
In *Venice*, here, please you to use mee, Sir——

MOSCA.

Will you goe, Madam ?

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

'Pray you, Sir, use mee. In faith,
The more you use mee the more I shall conceive,
You have forgot our quarrell.

PEREGRINE.

This is rare ! Sir *Politique Would-bee* ?

THE FOXE

No, Sir *Politique Baud*,
To bring me, thus, acquainted with his wife !
Well, wise Sir *Pol*; since you have practis'd, thus,
Upon my freshman-ship, Ile trie your salt-head,
What prooffe it is against a counter-plot.

ACT 4. SCENE 4.

VOLTRE. CORBACCIO. CORVINO. MOSCA.

Well, now you know the carriage of the busnesse,
Your constancy is all, that is requir'd
Unto the safety of it.

MOSCA.

Is the *lie*
Safely convey'd amongst us? is that sure?
Knowes every man his burden?

CORVINO.

Yes.

MOSCA.

Then shrink not.

CORVINO.

But, knowes the Advocate the truth?

MOSCA.

O, Sir, by no meanes. I devis'd a formall tale,
That salv'd your reputation. But, be valiant, Sir.

CORVINO.

I feare no one, but him; that, this his pleading
Should make him stand for a co-heire——

MOSCA.

Co-halter,

THE FOXE

Hang him : wee will but use his tongue, his noise,
As we do *Croakers*, here.

CORVINO.

I, what shall he do ?

MOSCA.

When we ha' done, you meane ?

CORVINO.

Yes,

MOSCA.

Why, wee'll thinke :

Sell him for *Mummia* : hee's halfe dust already.

Do not you smile, to see this *Buffalo*,

How he do's sport it with his head ? I' should,

If all were well, and past. Sir, onely you

Are hee, that shall enjoy the crop of all,

And these not know for whome they toile.

CORBACCIO.

I, peace.

MOSCA.

But, you shall eate it. Much. Worshipfull Sir,

Mercury sit upon your thundring tongue,

Or the *French Hercules*, and make your language

As conquering as his club, to beate along,

(As with a tempest) flat, our adversaries ;

But, much more, yours, Sir.

ORE.

Iere they come, ha' done.

have another witsesse, if you neede, Sir, I can produce.

RE.

ho is it ?

I have her.

THE FOXE

ACT 4. SCENE 5.

AVOCATORE, 4. BONARIO. CELIA. VOLTORE. CORBACCIO.
CORVINO. MOSCA. NOTARIO. COMMANDADORI.

AVOCATORE 1.

The like of this the *Senate* never heard of.

AVOCATORE 2.

'Twil come most strange to them, whē we report it.

AVOCATORE 4.

The Gentlewoman has beene ever held of un-reproved name.

AVOCATORE 3

So has the youth.

AVOCATORE 4.

The more unnaturall part that of his father.

AVOCATORE 2.

More, of the husband.

AVOCATORE 1.

I not know to give his act a name, it is so monstrous!

AVOCATORE 4.

But the Impostor, he is a thing created
T' exceed example!

AVOCATORE 1.

And all after-times!

AVOCATORE 2.

I never heard a true voluptuary
Describ'd, but him.

AVOCATORE 3.

Apppeare yet those were cited?

THE FOXE

NOTARIO.

All, but the old Magnifico, *Volpone*.

AVOCATORE 2.

Why is not hee here?

MOSCA.

Please your *Father-hoods*,
Here is his Advocate. Himselfe's so weake,
So feeble——

AVOCATORE 4.

What are you?

BONARIO.

His *Parasite*, his Knave, his Pandar—I beseech the *Court*,
He may be forc'd to come, that your grave eies
May beare strong witsnesse of his strange impostures.

VOLTORE.

Upon my faith, and credit, with your vertues,
Hee is not able to endure the ayre.

AVOCATORE 2.

Bring him, howe ever.

AVOCATORE 3.

We will see him.

AVOCATORE 4.

Fetch him.

VOLTORE.

Your *Father-hoodes* fit pleasures be obey'd,
But sure, the sight will rather move your pittyes,
Then indignation; may it please the *Court*,
In the meane time, hee may be heard in me:
I know this *Place* most voide of preiudice,
And therefore crave it, since we have no reason
To feare our truth should hurt our cause.

THE FOXE

AVOCATORE 3.

Speake, free.

VOLTORE.

Then know, most honor'd *Fathers*, I must now
Discover, to your strangely 'abused eares,
The most prodigious, and most frontlesse piece
Of solid impudence, and trechery,
That ever vicious Nature yet brought forth
To shame the *State of Venice*. This lewd woman,
(That wants no artificall lookes, or teares,
To help the visor, she has now put on)
Hath long beene knowne a close adultresse,
To that lascivious youth there, not suspected,
I say, but knowne; and taken, in the act,
With him; and by this man, the easie husband,
Pardon'd; whose timelesse bounty makes him, now,
Stand here, the most unhappy, innocent person,
That ever mans owne vertue made accus'd.
For these, not knowing how to owe a gift
Of that deare grace, but with their shame; being plac'd
So' above all powers of their gratitude,
Began to hate the benefit; and, in place
Of thanks, devise t' extirpe the memory
Of such an act: wherein, I pray your *Father-hoods*,
To observe the malice, yea, the rage of creatures
Discover'd in their evils; and what heart
Such take, even, from their crimes. But that, anone,
Will more appeare. This Gentleman, the father,
Hearing of this foule fact, with many others,
That dayly strooke at his too-tender eares,
And, griev'd in nothing more, then that he could not
Preserve himself a parent (his sonnes ill
Growing to that strange floud) at last decreed
To dis-inherit him.

THE FOXE

AVOCATORE 1.

These be strange turnes !

AVOCATORE 2.

The young mans fame was ever faire, and honest.

VOLTORE.

So much more full of danger is his vice,
That can beguile so, under shade of vertue.
But, as I said (my honour'd *Sires*) his father
Having this settled purpose, (by what meanes
To him betray'd, we know not) and this day
Appointed for the deed, that Parricide,
(I cannot style him better) by confederacy
Preparing this his Paramour to be there,
Entered *Volpone's* house (who was the man,
Your *Father-hoods* must understand, design'd
For the inheritance), there, sought his father;
But with what purpose sought he him, my *Sires*?
(I tremble to pronounce it, that a sonne
Unto a father, and to such a father
Should have so foule, felonious intent)
It was, to murder him. When, being prevented
By his more happy absence, what then did hee?
Not check his wicked thoughts; no, now new deedes:
(Mischiefe doth ever ende where it begins)
An act of horror, *Fathers*! he drag'd forth:
The aged Gentleman, that had there lien, bed-rid,
Three yeares, and more, out of his innocent couch,
Naked upon the floore, there left him; wounded
His servant in the face; and with this strumpet,
The stale to his forg'd practise, who was glad
To be so active, (I shall here desire
Your *Father-hoods* to note but my collections,
As most remarkable) thought, at once, to stop
His fathers ends; discredit his free choise

THE FOXE

In the old Gentleman ; redeeme themselves,
By laying infamy, upon this man,
To whome, with blushing, they should owe their lives.

AVOCATORE 1.

What proofes have you of this?

BONARIO.

Most honour'd *Fathers*,
I humbly crave, there be no credite given
To this man's mercenary tongue.

AVOCATORE 2.

Forbeare.

BONARIO.

His soule moves in his fee.

AVOCATORE 3.

O, Sir.

BONARIO.

This fellow,
For six *sols* more, would pleade against his *Maker*.

AVOCATORE 1.

You do forget your selfe.

VOLTORE.

Nay, nay, grave *Fathers*,
Let him have scope ; can any man imagine
That hee will spare his accuser, that would not
Have spar'd his parent?

AVOCATORE 1.

Well, produce your proofes.

CELIA.

I would, I could forget, I were a creature.

VOLTORE.

Signior *Corbaccio*.

THE FOXE

AVOCATORE 4.

What is hee ?

VOLTORE.

The father.

AVOCATORE 2.

Has he had an oath ?

NOTARIO.

Yes.

CORBACCIO.

What must I doe now ?

NOTARIO.

Your testimony's crav'd.

CORBACCIO.

Speak to the knave ?

He ha' my mouth, first, stopt with earth ; my heart
Abhors his knowledge : I disclaime in him.

AVOCATORE 1.

But for what cause ?

CORBACCIO.

The mere portent of nature.

Hee is an utter stranger to my loynes.

BONARIO.

Have they made you to this ?

CORBACCIO.

I will not heare thee,
Monster of men, swine, goate, wolfe, Parricide,
Speake not, thou viper.

BONARIO.

Sir, I will sit downe,
And rather wish my innocence should suffer,
Than I resist the authority of a father.

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

Signior *Corvino*.

AVOCATORE 2.

This is strange!

AVOCATORE 1.

Who's this?

NOTARIO.

The husband.

AVOCATORE 4.

Is he sworne?

NOTARIO.

Hee is.

AVOCATORE 3.

Speake then.

CORVINO.

This woman (please your *Father-hoods*), is a whore,
Of most hot exercise, more than a partrich,
Upon record——

AVOCATORE 1.

No more.

CORVINO.

Neighes, like a gennet.

NOTARIO.

Preserve the honour of the *Court*.

CORVINO.

I shall, and modesty of your most reverend eares.
And, yet, I hope that I may say, these eyes
Have seene her glew'd unto that peece of Cedar;
That fine well-timber'd gallant: and that, here,
The letters may be read, thorough the horne,
That make the story perfect.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Excellent, Sir.

CORVINO.

There is no harme in this, now, is there?

MOSCA.

None.

CORVINO.

Or if I said, I hop'd, that she were onward

To her damnation, if there be a hell

Greater than whore, and woman; a good *Christian*

May make the doubt.

AVOCATORE 3.

His griefe hath made him frantique,

AVOCATORE 1.

Remove him, hence.

AVOCATORE 2.

Looke to the woman.

CORVINO.

Rare!

Prettily fain'd againe!

AVOCATORE 4.

Stand from about her.

AVOCATORE 1.

Give her the ayre.

AVOCATORE 3.

What can you say?

MOSCA.

My wound,

(May't please your wisdomes) speakes for mee, receiv'd

In ayde of my good Patron, when he mist

His sought-for father, when that well-taught dame

Had her *Qu*: given her, to crie out a rape.

THE FOXE

BONARIO.

O, most lay'd impudence! *Fathers*.

AVOCATORE 3.

Sir, be silent,

You had your hearing free, so must they theirs.

AVOCATORE 2.

I do begin to doubt th' imposture here.

AVOCATORE 4.

This woman has too many moods.

VOLTORE.

Grave *Fathers*, she is a creature, of a most profest,
And prostituted lewdnesse.

CORVINO.

Most impetuous, unsatisfied, grave *Fathers*,

VOLTORE.

May her faynings

Not take your wisdoms: but, this day, she bayted

A stranger, a grave Knight, with her loose eyes,

And more lascivious kisses. This man saw 'hem

Together, on the water, in a *Gondola*.

MOSCA.

Here is the Lady herselfe, that saw 'hem too,

Without; who, then, had in the open streetes

Purseg'd them, but for saving her Knights honour.

AVOCATORE 1.

Produce that Lady.

AVOCATORE 2.

Let her come.

AVOCATORE 4.

These things,

They strike, with wonder!

AVOCATORE 3.

I am turn'd a stone!

THE FOXE

ACT 4. SCENE 6.

MOSCA. LADY. AVOCATORI. &c.

Be resolute, Madam.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I, this same is shee,
Out, thou *Camelion* harlot ; now, thine eyes
Vie tears with the *Hyæna* : darst thou looke
Upon my wronged face? I crie your pardons.
I feare, I have (forgettingly) transgrest
Against the dignity of the *Court*——

AVOCATORE 2.

No, Madame.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

And beene exorbitant——

AVOCATORE 2.

You have not, Lady.

AVOCATORE 4.

These proofes are strong.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Surely, I had no purpose,
To scandalize your *Honors*, or my sexes.

AVOCATORE 3.

We doe beleeeve it.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Surely, you may beleeeve it.

AVOCATORE 2.

Madame, wee doe.

THE FOXE

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Indeede, you may ; my breeding
Is not so course——

AVOCATORE 4.

Wee know it.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

To offend with pertinacy——

AVOCATORE 3.

Lady.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Such a presence ;
No, surely.

AVOCATORE 1.

Wee well thinke it.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

You may thinke it.

AVOCATORE 1.

Let her o'recome. What witnesses have you,
To make good your report ?

BONARIO.

Our consciences :

CELIA.

And heaven, that never fayles the innocent.

AVOCATORE 4.

These are no testimonies.

BONARIO.

Not, in your *Courts*,
Where multitude, and clamour, overcomes.

AVOCATORE 1.

Nay, then you do waxe insolent.

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

Here, hear,
The testimony comes, that will convince,
And put to utter dumbnesse, their bold tongues.
See here, grave *Fathers*, here's the Ravisher,
The Rider on mens wives, the great Impostor,
The grand Voluptuary : Do you not thinke,
These limbes should affect *Venery* ? or these eyes
Covet a concubine ? 'Pray you, marke these hands,
Are they not fit to stroke a Ladies brests ?
Perhaps, he doth dissemble.

BONARIO.

So he do's.

VOLTORE.

Would you ha' him tortur'd ?

BONARIO.

I would have him prov'd.

VOLTORE.

Best trie him, then, with goades, or burning Irons ;
Put him to the *strappado* ; I have heard,
The Rack hath cured the *goute* ; faith, give it him,
And helpe him of a malady, bee courteous :
I'll undertake, before these honor'd *Fathers*,
He shall have, yet, as many left diseases,
As she has knowne adulterers, or thou strumpets.
O, my most equall *Hearers*, if these deedes,
Acts of this bold, and most exorbitant straine,
May passe with suffrance ; what one Cittizen,
But owes the forfeit of his life, yea, fame,
To him that dares traduce him ? Which of you
Are safe, my honord *Fathers* ? I would aske,
(With leave of your grave *Father-hoods*) if their plot
Have any face, or colour like to truth ?

THE FOXE

Or if, unto the dullest nostrill, here,
It smell not ranke, and most abhorred slaunder?
I crave your care of this good Gentleman,
Whose life is much indanger'd, by their *fable*;
And, as for them, I will conclude with this,
That vicious persons, when they are hot, and flesh'd
In impious acts, their constancy abounds:
Damn'd deedes are done with greatest confidence.

AVOCATORE 1.

Take 'hem to custody, and sever them.

AVOCATORE 2.

'Tis pittie, two such prodigies should live.

AVOCATORE 1.

Let the old Gentleman be return'd with care;
I'am sorry our credulity wrong'd him.

AVOCATORE 4.

These are two creatures!

AVOCATORE 3.

I have an earthquake in me!

AVOCATORE 2.

Their shame (even in their cradles) fled their faces.

AVOCATORE 4.

You' have done a worthy service to the *State*, Sir,
In their discovery.

AVOCATORE 1.

You shall heare, ere night,
What punishment the *Court* decrees upon 'hem.

VOLTORE.

Wee thanke your *Father-hoods*. How like you it?

MOSCA.

Rare.

I'd ha' your tongue, Sir, tipt with gold, for this;

THE FOXE

I'd ha' you be the heyre to the whole Citty ;
The earth I'd have want men, ere you want living
They are bound t' erect your *Statue*, in *St. Markes*.
Signior *Corvino*, I would have you goe,
And shew your selfe, that you have conquer'd.

CORVINO.

Yes.

MOSCA.

It was much better, that you should professe,
Your selfe a cuckold, thus ; then that the other
Should have beene prov'd.

CORVINO.

Nay, I consider'd that ;
Now it is her fault :

MOSCA.

Then, it had beene yours.

CORVINO.

True, I do doubt this Advocate, still.

MOSCA.

I' faith,
You need not, I dare ease you of that care.

CORVINO.

I trust thee, *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

As your, owne soule, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Mosca.

MOSCA.

Now for your businesse, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

How ? Ha' you busines ?

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Yes, yours, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

O, none else?

MOSCA.

None else, not I.

CORBACCIO.

Be carefull, then.

MOSCA.

Rest you, with both your eies, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Dispatch it.

MOSCA.

Instantly.

CORBACCIO.

And looke, that all,

What-ever, bee put in, iewells, plate, moneyes,

House-holdstufte, bedding, curtines.

MOSCA.

Curtine-rings, Sir.

Onely, the Advocates fee must be deducted.

CORBACCIO.

Ile pay him, now: you'll be too prodigall.

MOSCA.

Sir, I must tender it.

CORBACCIO.

Two *Cecchines* is well?

MOSCA.

No, sixe, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

'Tis too much.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

He talk'd a great while,
You must consider that, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Well, there's three——

MOSCA.

Ile give it him.

CORBACCIO.

Doe so, and there's for thee.

MOSCA.

Bountifull bones! What horride strange offence
Did he commit 'gainst nature, in his youth,
Worthy this age? You see, Sir, how I worke
Unto your ends; take you no notice.

VOLTORE.

No, Ile leave you.

MOSCA.

All, is yours, the Devill, and all,
Good Advocate.—Madame, I'll bring you home.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

No, Ile go see your Patron.

MOSCA.

That you shall not :
Ile tell you, why. My purpose is, to urge
My Patron to reforme his Will; and, for
The zeale you have shew'n to day, whereas before
You were but third, or fourth, you shall be now
Put in the first; which would appeare as beg'd,
If you be present. Therefore——

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

You shall sway mee.

ACT 5. SCENE 1.

- VOLPONE.



OLPONE.

Well, I am here ;
and all this brunt
is past :

I nère was in dislike
with my disguise,
Till this fled
moment ; here,
'twas good, in
private,

But, in your publike,
Cave, whil'st I
breath.

'Fore God, my left
legge 'gan to have
the crampe,
And I apprênded,
straight, some
power had strooke
mee

With a dead *Palsey* :
Well, I must be
merry,

And shake it off. A many of these feares
Would put mee into some villanous disease,
Should they come thick upon mee : Ile prevent 'hem.
Give mee a boule of lusty wine, to fright

THE FOXE

This humor from my heart ; (Hum, hum, hum)
'Tis almost gone, already : I shall conquer.
Any devise, now, of rare, ingenious knavery,
That would possesse mee with a violent laughter,
Would make mee up, againe : So, so, so, so.
This heate is life ; 'tis blood, by this time : *Mosca!*

ACT 5. SCENE 2.

MOSCA. VOLPONE. NANO. CASTRONE.

How now, Sir? do's the day looke cleare againe?
Are we recoverd? and wrought out of error,
Into our way? to see our path, before us?
Is our trade free, once more?

VOLPONE.

Exquisite *Mosca!*

MOSCA.

Was it not carry'd learnedly?

VOLPONE.

And stoutly.

Good wits are greatest in extremities.

MOSCA.

It were folly, beyond thought, to trust
Any grand act unto a cowardly spirit :
You are not taken with it, enough, mee thinks.

VOLPONE.

O, more, then if I had enjoy'd the wench :
The pleasure of all woman-kind's not like it.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Why, now you speake, Sir. We must, here be fixt ;
Here, we must rest ; this is our maister-peice ;
We cannot thinke, to goe beyond this.

VOLPONE.

True. Thou 'hast playd thy prise, my precious *Mosca*.

MOSCA.

Nay Sir, to gull the *Court*——

VOLPONE.

And, quite divert the torrent,
Upon the innocent.

MOSCA.

Yes, and to make
So rare a *Musique*, out of *Discordes*——

VOLPONE.

Right.
That, yet, to mee's the strangest ! how th' hast borne it !
That these (being so divided 'mongst themselves)
Should not sent some-what, or in mee, or thee,
Or doubt their owne side.

MOSCA.

True. They will not see't,
Too much light blinds 'hem, I thinke : each of 'hem
Is so possest, and stuf with his owne hopes,
That any thing, unto the contrary,
Never so true, or never so apparent,
Never so palpable, they will resist it——

VOLPONE.

Like a temptation of the Devill.

MOSCA.

Right, Sir.
Merchants may talke of trade, and your great Signiors

THE FOXE

Of land, that yeelds well ; but if *Italy*
Have any glebe, more fructfull, then these fellowes,
I am deceiv'd. Did not your Advocate rare ?

VOLPONE.

*O, my most honor'd Fathers, my grave Fathers,
Under correction of your Father-hoods,
What face of truth is, here ? If these strange deedes
May passe, most honor'd Fathers—I had much a doe
To forbear laughing.*

MOSCA.

'T seem'd to mee, you sweate, Sir.

VOLPONE.

In troth, I did a little.

MOSCA.

But confesse, Sir, were you not daunted ?

VOLPONE.

In good faith, I was
A little in a mist ; but not delected ;
Never, but still my selfe.

MOSCA.

I thinke it, Sir.
Now (so truth helpe mee), I must needes say this, Sir,
And, out of conscience ; for your Advocate :
He' has taken paynes, in faith, Sir, and deserv'd,
In my poore iudgement, I speake it, under favour,
Not to contrary you, Sir, very richly—
Well—to be cosen'd.

VOLPONE.

Troth, and I thinke so too,
By that I heard him, in the latter ende.

MOSCA.

O, but before, Sir ; had you heard him, first,
Draw it to certaine heads, then aggravate,

THE FOXE

Then use his vehement figures—I look'd stil
When he would shift a shirt ; and, doing this
Out of pure love, no hope of gaine——

VOLPONE.

'Tis right.

I cannot answer him, *Mosca*, as I would,
Not yet ; but, for thy sake, at thy intreaty,
I will beginne, even now, to vex 'hem all :
This very instant.

MOSCA.

Good, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Call the *Dwarfe*
And *Eunuch*, forth.

MOSCA.

Gastrone, Nano.

NANO.

Here.

VOLPONE.

Shall we have a *Jig*, now ?

MOSCA.

What you please, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Goe,
Streight, give out, about the streetes, you two,
That I am dead ; doe it, with constancy,
Sadly, do you heare ? impute it to the grieve
Of this late slander.

MOSCA.

What doe you meane Sir ?

VOLPONE.

O,
I shall have, instantly, my *Vulture, Crow*,

THE FOXE

Raven, come flying hither (on the newes)
To peck for carrion, my shee-*Wolfe*, and all,
Greedy, and full of expectation——

MOSCA.

And then, to have it ravish'd from their^m mouths?

VOLPONE.

'Tis true, I will ha' thee put on a gowne,
And take upon thee, as thou wert mine heire;
Show 'hem a Will; Open that chest, and reach
Forth one of those, that has the *Blankes*. Ile straight
Put in thy name.

MOSCA.

It will be rare, Sir.

VOLPONE.

I,
When they e'ene gape, and finde themselves deluded——

MOSCA.

Yes.

VOLPONE.

And, thou use them skirvily.
Dispatch, get on thy gowne.

MOSCA.

But what, Sir, if they aske after the body?

VOLPONE.

Say, it was corrupted.

MOSCA.

Ile say it stunke, Sir; and was faine t'have it
Coffin'd up instantly, and sent away.

VOLPONE.

Any thing, what thou wilt. Hold, heres my Will.
Get thee a cap, a count-booke, pen and inke,

THE FOXE

Papers afore thee ; sit, as thou wert taking
An inventory of parcells : Ile get up,
Behind the curtine, on a stoole, and hearken ;
Sometime, peepe over ; see, how they do looke,
With what degrees, their bloud doth leave their faces,
O, 'twill afford me a rare meale of laughter.

MOSCA.

Your Advocate will turne starke dull, upon it.

VOLPONE.

It will take of his *Oratories* edge.

MOSCA.

But your *Clarissimo*, old round-backe, hee
Will crumpe you, like a hog-louse, with the touch.

VOLPONE.

And what *Corvino* ?

MOSCA.

O, Sir, looke for him,
To morrow morning, with a rope and a dagger,
To visite all the streetes ; he must runne madd,
My Lady too, that came into the *Court*,
To beare false witnesse, for your Worship.

VOLPONE.

Yes,
And kist mee 'fore the *Fathers* ; when my face
Flow'd all with oyles——

MOSCA.

And sweate, Sir. Why, your gold
Is such another med'cine, it dries up
All those offensive savors ! It transformes
The most deformed, and restores 'hem lovely,
As't were the strange *poeticall Girdle*. IOVE
Could not invent, t' himselfe, a shroud more subtle,

THE FOXE

To passe *Acrisius* guardes. It is the thing
Makes all the world her grace, her youth, her beauty.

VOLPONE.

I thinke, she loves me.

MOSCA.

Who? the Lady, Sir?
Shee's iealous of you.

VOLPONE.

Do'st thou say so?

MOSCA.

Hearke,
There's some, already.

VOLPONE.

Looke.

MOSCA.

It is the *Vulture* :
Hee has the quickest sent.

VOLPONE.

Ile to my place,
Thou, to thy posture.

MOSCA.

I am set.

VOLPONE.

But, *Mosca*,
Play the Artificer now, torture 'hem, rarely.

THE FOXE

ACT 5. SCENE 3.

VOLTORE. MOSCA. CORBACCIO. CORVINO. LADY.
VOLPONE.

How now, my *Mosca*?

MOSCA.

Turkie Carpets, nine——

VOLTORE.

Taking an inventory? that is well.

MOSCA.

Two suites of bedding, Tissew——

VOLTORE.

Where's the *Will*?

Let me read that, the while.

CORBACCIO.

So, set me downe:

And get you home.

VOLTORE.

Is he come, now, to trouble us?

MOSCA.

Of Cloth of gold, two more——

CORBACCIO.

Is it done, *Mosca*?

MOSCA.

Of severall vellets, eight——

VOLTORE.

I like his care.

CORBACCIO.

Dost thou not heare?

THE FOXE

CORVINO.

Ha? is th' hour come, *Mosca*?

VOLPONE.

I, now, they muster.

CORVINO.

What do's the Advocate, here?
Or this *Corbaccio*?

CORBACCIO.

What doe these, here?

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Mosca?
Is his thred spunne?

MOSCA.

Eight Chests of Linnen——

VOLPONE.

O, my fine *Dame Would-bee*, too!

CORVINO.

Mosca, the Will,
That I may shew it these, and rid 'hem hence.

MOSCA.

Six Chests of Diaper, foure of Damaske.—There.

CORBACCIO.

Is that the Will?

MOSCA.

Downe-Beds, and Boulsters——

VOLPONE.

Rare!
Bee busy still. Now, they begin to flutter:
They never thinke of me. Looke, see, see, see!
How their swift eies runne over the long *deed*,
Unto the *Name*, and to the *legacies*,
What is bequeath'd them, there——

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Ten Sutes of Hangings—

VOLPONE.

I, i' their garters, *Mosca*. Now, their hopes
Are at the gaspe.

VOLTORE.

Mosca the heire?

CORBACCIO.

What's that?

VOLPONE.

My Advocate is dumbe ; Looke to my Merchant,
He has heard of some strange storme, a ship is lost :
He faintes ; My Lady will swoune. Old Glazen-cies,
He hath not reach'd his dispaire, yet.

CORBACCIO.

All these
Are out of hope ; I' am sure the man.

CORVINO.

But, *Mosca—*

MOSCA.

Two Cabinets—

CORVINO.

Is this in earnest?

MOSCA.

*One
Of Ebony—*

CORVINO.

Or, do you but delude mee?

MOSCA.

The other, Mother of Pearle—
I am very busie.

THE FOXE

Good faith, it is a fortune throwne upon me—
Item, one Salt of Agat—not my seeking.

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Do you heare, Sir ?

MOSCA.

A perfum'd Boxe—'pray you forbear,
You see I am troubled—*made of an Onyx*—

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

How !

MOSCA.

To morrow, or next day, I shall be at leasure,
To talke with you all.

CORVINO.

Is this my large hopes issue ?

LADY POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir, I must have a fayrer answer.

MOSCA.

Madame ?

Mary, and shall : 'pray you, fairely quit my house.
Nay, raise no tempest with your lookes ; but, hearke you :
Remember, what your Ladyship offered mee,
To put you in, an heire ; go to, think on't.
And what you said, eene your best *Madames* did
For maintaynance, and why not you ? Inough.
Go home, and use the poore Sir *Poll*, your Knight, well ;
For feare I tell some riddles ; Go, be melancholique.

VOLPONE.

O, my fine Devill !

CORVINO.

Mosca, 'pray you a word.

MOSCA.

Lord ! will not you take your dispatch hence, yet ?
Me thinkes (of all) you should have beene th' example.

THE FOXE

Why should you stay, here? with what thought? what promise?
Heare you; do not you know, I know you an asse?
And, that you would; most faine have been a wittoll,
If fortune would have let you? that you are
A declar'd cuckold, on good termes? This Pearle,
You'll say, was yours? right. This Diamant?
Ile not deny't, but thanke you. Much here, else?
It may be so. Why, thinke that these good workes
May helpe to hide your bad: Ile not betray you,
Although you be but extraordinary,
And have it only in title, it sufficeth.
Go home; be melancholique, too: or madd.

VOLPONE.

Rare *Mosca*! how his vallany becomes him!

VOLTORE.

Certaine, he doth delude all these, for mee.

CORBACCIO.

Mosca the heire?

VOLPONE.

O, his fowre eies have found it.

CORBACCIO.

I' am cosen'd, cheated, by a *Parasite*-slave;
Harlot, t'hast gul'd mee.

MOSCA.

Yes, Sir. Stop your mouth,
Or I shall draw the only tooth, is left.
Are not you he, that filthy covetous wretch,
With the three legges, that, here, in hope of prey,
Have, any time this three yeare, snuft about,
With your most grov'ling nose, and would have hir'd
Mee, to the pois'ning of my Patron? Sir?
Are not you he, that have, to day, in *Court*
Profess'd the dis-inheriting of your sonne?

THE FOXE

Periur'd yourselfe? Goe home, and die, and stinke;
If you but croake a sillable, all comes out:
Away, and call your porters; go, go, stinke.

VOLPONE.

Excellent varlet!

VOLTORE.

Now, my faithfull *Mosca*,
I finde thy constancie.

MOSCA.

Sir?

VOLTORE.

Sincere.

MOSCA.

A Table

Of Porphyry—I ma'rle you'll be thus troublesome.

VOLTORE.

Nay, leave off now, they are gone.

MOSCA.

Why? who are you?

What? who did send for you? O' crie you mercy,

Reverend Sir: good faith, I am griev'd for you,

That any chance of mine should thus defeate

Your (I must needs say) most deserving travailes:

But, I protest, Sir, it was cast upon me,

And I could, almost, wish to be without it,

But that the will o' th' dead must be observ'd.

Mary, my ioy is, that you need it not,

You have a gift, Sir (thanke your education),

Will never let you want, while there are men,

And malice to breed causes. Would I had

But halfe the like, for all my fortune, Sir.

If I have any sutes (as I do hope,

Things being so easie, and direct, I shall not)

THE FOXE

I will make bold with your obstreperous aide,
(Conceive me) for your fee, Sir. In meane time,
You that have so much law, I know ha' the conscience,
Not to be covetous of what is mine.
Good Sir, I thanke you, for my plate; 'twill helpe
To set up a young man. Good faith, you looke
As you were costive; best goe home, and purge, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Bid him, eate lettice well: my witty *mischiefe*,
Let me embrace thee. O, that I could now
Transforme thee to a *Venus—Mosca*, goe,
Streight, take my habit of *Clarissimo*,
And walke the streets; bee seene, torment 'hem' more:
Wee must pursew, as well as plot. Who would
Have lost this feast?

MOSCA.

I doubt, it will loose them.

VOLPONE.

O, my recovery shall recover all,
That I could now but thinke on some disguise,
To meete 'hem in, and aske 'hem questions.
How I would vexe, 'hem still, at every turne?

MOSCA.

Sir, I can fit you.

VOLPONE.

Canst thou?

MOSCA.

Yes, I knowe one o' the *Commandadori*, Sir, so like you,
Him will I streight make drunke, and bring you his habite.

VOLPONE.

A rare disguise, and answering thy braine!
O, I will be a sharp disease unto 'hem.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

Sir, you must looke for curses——

VOLPONE.

Till they burst ;

The FOXE fares ever best, when he is curst.

ACT 5. SCENE 4.

PEREGRINE. MERCATORI 3. WOMAN. POLITIQUE.

Am I inough disguis'd ?

MERCATORE 1.

I warrant you.

PEREGRINE.

All my ambition is to fright him, onely.

MERCATORE 2.

If you could ship him away, twere excellent.

MERCATORE 3.

To *Zant*, or to *Alepo* ?

PEREGRINE.

Yes, and have's

Adventures put i' th' *Booke of voyages*,

And his guld story registred, for truth ?

Well, Gentlemen, when I am in, a while ;

And that you thinke us warme, in our discourse,

Know your approaches.

MERCATORE 1.

Trust it, to our care.

PEREGRINE.

'Save you, faire Lady. Is Sir *Poll*. within ?

THE FOXE

WOMAN.

I do not know, Sir.

PEREGRINE.

'Pray you, say unto him,
Here is a merchant, upon earnest businesse,
Desires to speake with him.

WOMAN.

I will see, Sir.

PEREGRINE.

'Pray you.
I see, the Family is all female here.

WOMAN.

Hee sai's, Sir, hee has waighty affaires of *State*,
That now require him whole ; some other time,
You may possesse him.

PEREGRINE.

'Pray you say againe,
If those require him whole ; these will exact him,
Whereof I bring him tidings. What might bee
His grave affair of *State*, now ? how, to make
Bolognian sauseges, here, in *Venice*, sparing
One o' th' *Ingredients*.

WOMAN.

Sir, he sai's, he knowes
By your word *tidings*, that you are no *States-man*,
And therefore, wills you stay.

PEREGRINE.

Sweet, 'pray you returne him,
I have not read so many *Proclamations*,
And studied them, for words, as hee has done——
But, here he deignes to come.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir ! I must crave

THE FOXE

Your courteous pardon ; there hath chanc'd (to-day)
Unkinde disaster 'twixt my Lady and mee ;
And I was penning my *Apologie*
To give her satisfaction, as you came, now.

PEREGRINE.

Sir, I am greiv'd, I bring you worse disaster ;
The Gentleman, you met at th' *Port* to-day,
That told you, he was newly arriv'd——

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I, was a fugitive *Punke* ?

PEREGRINE.

No, Sir, a Spie, set on you,
And hee has made relation to the *Senate*,
That you profest to him to have a plot
To sell the *State* of *Venice* to the *Turke*.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

O mee.

PEREGRINE.

For which, warrants are sign'd by this time,
To apprehend you, and to search your study,
For papers——

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Alasse, Sir. I have none, but *notes*
Drawne out of *Play-bookes*——

PEREGRINE.

All the better, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

And some *Essayes*. What shall I doe ?

PEREGRINE.

Sir, Best
Convey your selfe into a Sugar-Chest :

THE FOXE

Or, if you could lie round, a Frayle were rare :
And I could send you, aboard.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir, I but talk'd so,
For discourse sake, merely.

PEREGRINE.

Hearke, they are there.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I am a wretch, a wretch.

PEREGRINE.

What will you do, Sir?
Ha' you nere a Curren-Butt to leape into?
They'll put you to the Rack, you must be sodaine.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Sir, I have an ingine——

MERCATORE 3.

Sir *Politique Would-bee*?

MERCATORE 2.

Where is hee?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

That I have thought upon, before time.

PEREGRINE.

What is it?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

I shall nêre indure the torture.
Mary, it is, Sir, of a *Tortoyse-shell*,
Apted, for these extremities : 'Pray you, Sir, helpe mee.
Here I' have a place, Sir, to put back my leggs,
Please you to lay it on, Sir, with this cap,
And my black gloves, Ile lie, Sir, like a *Tortoyse*,
Till they are gone.

THE FOXE

PEREGRINE.

And, call you this an ingine?

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Mine own devise—Good Sir, bid my wives women
To burne my papers.

MERCATORE 1.

Where's hee hid?

MERCATORE 3.

We must,
And will, sure, finde him.

MERCATORE 2.

Which is his study?

MERCATORE 1.

What are you, Sir?

PEREGRINE.

I' am a merchant, that came here
To looke upon this *Tortoyse*.

MERCATORE 3.

Howe?

MERCATORE 1.

St. Marke!

What Beast is this?

PEREGRINE.

It is a Fish.

MERCATORE 2.

Come out, here.

PEREGRINE.

Nay, you may strike him, Sir, and tread upon him :
Hee'll beare a cart.

THE FOXE

MERCATORE 1.

What, to runne over him ?

PEREGRINE.

Yes.

MERCATORE 3.

Letts iumpe, upon him

MERCATORE 2.

Can hee not goe ?

PEREGRINE.

He creepes Sir.

MERCATORE 1.

Letts see him creepe.

PEREGRINE.

No, good Sir, you will hurt him.

MERCATORE 2.

(Heart) Ile see him creepe ; or prick his gutts.

MERCATORE 3.

Come out, here.

PEREGRINE.

'Pray you, Sir, (creepe a little)

MERCATORE 1.

Forth.

MERCATORE 2.

Yet further.

PEREGRINE.

Good Sir, (creepe)

MERCATORE. 2.

Wee'll see his leggs.

MERCATORE 3.

Gods' so hee has garters !

THE FOXE

MERCATORE 1.

I, and gloves!

MERCATORE 2.

Is this

Your fearefull *Tortoyse*?

PEREGRINE.

Now, Sir *Poll*. Wee are even;

For your next proiect, I shall be prepar'd:

I am sory, for the funerall of your notes, Sir.

MERCATORE 1.

'Twere a rare motion, to be seene in *Fleete-Streete*!

MERCATORE 2.

I, i' the *Terme*.

MERCATORE 1.

Or *Smithfield*, in the *Faire*.

MERCATORE 3.

Me thinkes, tis but a melancholique sight!

PEREGRINE.

Farewell, most *politique Tortoyse*.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Where's my Lady?

Knowes she of this?

WOMAN.

I know not, Sir.

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

Enquire. O, I shall bee the *fable* of all feasts,

The freight of the *Gazetti*; ship-boies tale;

And, which, is worst, even talke for Ordinaries.

WOMAN.

My Lady's come most melancholique, home,

And say's, Sir, she will straight to sea, for *Physick*.

THE FOXE

POLITIQUE WOULD-BEE.

And I, to shunne, this *place*, and *clime* for ever;
Creeping, with house, on back: and thinke it well,
To shrinke my poore head, in my *politique* shell.

ACT 5. SCENE 5.

VOLPONE. MOSCA.

Am I then like him?

MOSCA.

O, Sir, you are hee:
No man can sever you.

VOLPONE.

Good.

MOSCA.

But, what am I?

VOLPONE.

'Fore heav'n, a brave *Clarissimo*, thou becom'st it!
Pitty thou wert not borne one.

MOSCA.

If I hold
My made one, 'twill be well.

VOLPONE.

Ile goe and see
What newes, first, at the *Court*.

MOSCA.

Do so. My FOXE
Is out on his hole, and, ere he shall re-enter,
Ile make him languish, in his borrow'd case,

THE FOXE

Except he come to composition, with mee :

Androgyno, Castrone, Nano.

ALL.

Here.

MOSCA.

Go, recreate your selves, abroad ; go, sport :

So, now I have the keies, and am possest.

Since hee will, needes, be dead, afore his time,

Ile burie him, or gaine by him ; I 'am his heyre :

And so will keepe me, till he share at least.

To cosen him of all, were but a cheat

Well plac'd ; no man would construe it a sinne :

Let his sport pay for't, this is call'd the FOXE-trap !

ACT 5. SCENE 6.

CORBACCIO. CORVINO. VOLPONE.

They say, the *Court* is set.

CORVINO.

We must mainteine

Our first tale good, for both our reputations.

CORBACCIO.

Why ? mine's no tale : my sonne would, there, have kild me.

CORVINO.

That's true. I had forgot ; mine is, I am sure.

But, for your Will, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

I, Ile come upon him,

For that, hereafter ; now his Patron's dead.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

Signior *Corvino* ! and *Corbaccio* ! Sir,
Much ioy unto you.

CORVINO.

Of what ?

VOLPONE.

The sodaine good,
Dropt downe upon you——

CORBACCIO.

Where ?

VOLPONE.

(And, none knowes how)
From old *Volpone*, Sir.

CORBACCIO.

Out, errant Knave.

VOLPONE.

Let not your too much wealth, Sir, make you furious.

CORBACCIO.

Away, thou varlet.

VOLPONE.

Why, Sir ?

CORBACCIO.

Do'st thou mock me ?

VOLPONE.

You mock the world, Sir ; did you not change Wills ?

CORBACCIO.

Out, harlot !

VOLPONE.

O ! belike you are the man,
Signior *Corvino* ? 'faith, you carry it well ;
You grow not mad withall ; I love your spirit.

THE FOXE

You are not over-leaven'd, with your fortune.
You should ha' some would swell, now, like a wine-fat,
With such an *Autumne*—Did he gi' you all, Sir?

CORVINO.

Avoid, you Rascal.

VOLPONE.

'Troth, your wife has shewne
Her selfe a very woman ; but, you are well,
You need not care, you have a good estate,
To beare it out, Sir : better, by this chance.
Except *Corbaccio* have a share ?

CORBACCIO.

Hence varlet.

VOLPONE.

You will not be a'knowne, Sir ; why, 'tis wise.
Thus doe all Gam'sters, at all games, dissemble ;
No man will seeme to winne : here, comes my *Vulture*,
Heaving his beake up i' the ayre, and snuffing.

ACT 5. SCENE 7.

VOLTORE. VOLPONE.

Out-stript thus, by a *Parasite*? a slave ?
Would run on errands? and make legs, for crums.
Well, what Ile do——

VOLPONE.

The *Court* stayes for your worship.
I eene reioyce, Sir, at your worships happinesse,
And, that it fell into so learned hands,
That understand the fingering——

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

What do you meane?

VOLPONE.

I meane to be a sutor to your worship,
For the small tenement, out of reparations,
That, at the end of your long row of houses,
By the *Piscaria*: It was, in *Volpone's* time,
Your predecessor, ere he grew diseas'd,
A handsome, pretty, custom'd baudy-house,
As any was in *Venice* (none disprais'd)
But fell with him; His body, and that house
Decay'd together.

VOLTORE.

Come, Sir, leave your prating.

VOLPONE.

Why, if your worship give me but your hand,
That I may ha' the refusall; I have done.
'Tis a meere toy, to you, Sir; candle rents:
As your learn'd worship knowes—

VOLTORE.

What doe I know?

VOLPONE.

Mary, no end of your wealth, Sir, God decrease it.

VOLTORE.

Mistaking knave! what, mock'st thou my mis-fortune?

VOLPONE.

His blessing on your heart, Sir, would 'twere more.
Now, to my first againe; at the next corner.

THE FOXE

ACT 5. SCENE 8.

CORBACCIO. CORVINO. (MOSCA *passant*). VOLPONE.

See, in our habite! see the impudent varlet!

CORVINO.

That I could shoote mine eyes at him, like gun-stones!

VOLPONE.

But is this true, Sir, of the *Parasite*?

CORBACCIO.

Againe, t' afflict us? Monster!

VOLPONE.

In good faith, Sir,

I' am hartily greev'd, a beard of your grave length

Should be so over-reach'd. I never brook'd

That *Parasites* hayre; mee thought his nose should cosen,

There still was somewhat, in his looke, did promise

The bane of a *Clarissimo*.

CORBACCIO.

Knave——

VOLPONE.

Meethinkes

Yet you, that are so traded i' the world,

A witty merchant, the find bird, *Corvino*,

That have such morall *Emblemes* on your name,

Should not have sung your shame; and dropt your cheese:

To let the Foxe laugh at your emptinesse.

CORVINO.

Sirrah, you thinke, the priviledge of the place,

And your red saucy cap, that seemes (to mee)

Nayl'd to your iolt-head, with those two *Cecchines*,

THE FOXE

Can warrant your abuses ; come you, hither :
You shall perceive, Sir, I dare beate you. Approch.

VOLPONE.

No hast, Sir, I do know your valure, well,
Since you durst publish what you are, Sir.

CORVINO.

Tarry,
Il'd speake with you.

VOLPONE.

Sir, another time——

CORVINO.

Nay, now.

VOLPONE.

O God, Sir ! I were a wise man,
Would stand the fury of a distracted cuckold.

CORBACCIO.

What ! come againe ?

VOLPONE.

Upon 'hem, *Mosca* ; save mee.

CORBACCIO.

The ayre's infected, where he breathes.

CORVINO.

Lets flye him.

VOLPONE.

Excellent *Basiliske* ! Turne upon the *Vulture*.

THE FOXE

ACT 5. SCENE 9.

VOLTORE. MOSCA. VOLPONE.

Well, flesh-flie, it is *Sommer* with you, now ;
Your *Winter* will come on.

MOSCA.

Good Advocate,
'Pray thee, not rayle, nor threaten out of place, thus ;
Thoult make a *solécisme* (as Madam sayes).
Get you a biggen, more : your brayne breakes loose.

VOLTORE.

Well, Sir.

VOLPONE.

Would you have mee beate the insolent slave ?
Throw durt, uppon his first good cloathes ?

VOLTORE.

This same
Is, doubtlesse, some *Familiar* !

VOLPONE.

Sir, the *Court*,
In troth, stayes for you. I am madd, a Mule
That never read *Iustinian*, should get up,
And ride an Advocate. Had you no quirk
To avoide gullage, Sir, by such a creature ?
I hope you do but iest ; he has not done't :
This's but confederacy, to blinde the rest.
You are the heyre ?

VOLTORE.

A strange, officious,
Trouble-some knave ! thou dost torment mee.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

I know——

It cannot bee, Sir, that you should be cosen'd ;

'Tis not within the wit of man, to do it :

You are so wise, so prudent—And, 'tis fit

That wealth, and wisdom still, should go together.

ACT 5. SCENE 10.

AVOCATORI 4. NOTARIO. COMMANDADORI. BONARIC
CELIA. CORBACCIO. CORVINO. VOLTORE. VOLPONE.

Are all the parties, here ?

NOTARIO.

All, but the Advocate.

AVOCATORE 2.

And, here he comes.

AVOCATORE 1.

Then bring 'hem forth, to sentence.

VOLTORE.

O, my most honourd *Fathers*, let your mercy

Once winne upon your iustice, to forgive—

I am distracted——

VOLPONE.

What will he do, now ?

VOLTORE.

O,

I know not which to addresse my selfe to, first ;

Whether your *Father-hoods*, or these innocents——

CORVINO.

Will hee betray himselfe ?

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

Whome, equally
I have abus'd, out of most covetous endes——

CORVINO.

The man is mad!

CORBACCIO.

What's that?

CORVINO.

Hee is possest.

VOLTORE.

For which; now strooke in conscience, here I prostrate
My selfe at your offended feete, for pardon.

AVOCATORI 1, 2.

Arise.

CELIA.

O heav'n, how iust thou art!

VOLPONE.

I' am caught
I' myne owne noose——

CORVINO.

Be constant, Sir, nought now
Can helpe, but impudence.

AVOCATORE 1.

Speake forward.

COMMANDADORI.

Silence.

VOLTORE.

It is not passion in mee, reverend *Fathers*,
But onely conscience, conscience, my good *Sires*,
That makes me, now, tell trueth. That *Parasite*,
That Knave, hath beene the instrument of all——

THE FOXE

AVOCATORE 1.

Where is that Knave? fetch him.

VOLPONE.

I go.

CORVINO.

Grave *Fathers*,

This man's distracted, he confest it, now;

For, hoping to bee old *Volpone's* heyre,

Who now is dead——

AVOCATORE 3.

How?

AVOCATORE 2.

Is *Volpone* dead?

CORVINO.

Dead since, grave *Fathers*.

BONARIO.

O, sure vengeance!

AVOCATORE 1.

Stay—

Then, he was no deceiver?

VOLTRE.

O, no, none:

The *Parasite*, grave *Fathers*——

CORVINO.

He do's speake,

Out of mere envie, 'cause the servant's made

The thing, he gap't for; please your *Father-hoods*,

This is the truth: though, Ile not iustifie

The other, but he may bee somewhere faulty.

VOLTRE.

I, to your hopes, as well as mine, *Corvino*:

But Ile use modesty. 'Pleaseth your wisdomes,

THE FOXE

To viewe these certaine notes, and but conferre them;
And as I hope favour, they shall speake cleare truth.

CORVINO.

The Devill ha's entred him.

BONARIO.

Or bides in you.

AVOCATORE 4.

Wee have done ill, by a publike Officer
To send for him, if he be heire.

AVOCATORE 2.

For whome?

AVOCATORE 4.

Him, that they call the *Parasite*.

AVOCATORE 3.

'Tis true;

He is a man, of great estate, now left.

AVOCATORE 4.

Goe you, and learne his name; and say, the *Court*
Intreats his presence, here: but, to the clearing
Of some few doubts.

AVOCATORE 2.

This same's a *labyrinth*!

AVOCATORE 1.

Stand you unto your first report?

CORVINO.

My state,

My life, my fame——

BONARIO.

Where is't?

CORVINO.

Are at the stake.

THE FOXE

AVOCATORE 1.

Is yours so too?

CORBACCIO.

The Advocate's a knave :
And has a forked tongue——

AVOCATORE 2.

Speake to the point.

CORBACCIO.

So is the *Parasite*, too.

AVOCATORE 1.

This is confusion.

VOLTORE.

I do beseech your *Father-hoods*, read but those——

CORVINO.

And credit nothing, the false spirit hath writ,
It cannot be (my *Sires*) but he is possest.

ACT 5. SCENE 11.

VOLPONE. NANO. ANDROGYNO. CASTRONE.

To make a snare, for mine owne neck ! and run
My head into it, wilfully ! with laughter !
When I had newly scap't, was free, and cleare !
Out of mere wantonnesse ! ô, the dull Devill
Was in this braine of mine, when I devis'd it ;
And *Mosca* gave it second. He must now
Helpe to seare up this veyne, or we bleed dead.
How now ! who let you loose ? whether go you, now ?
What ? to buy Ginger-bread ? or to drown Kitlings ?

THE FOXE

NANO.

Sir, Maister *Mosca* call'd us out of dores,
And bid us all go play, and tooke the keyes.

ANDROGYNO.

Yes.

VOLPONE.

Did Maister *Mosca* take the keyes? why, so!
I am farder, in. These are my fine conceipts!
I must be merry, with a mischiefe to me!
What a vile wretch was I, that could not beare
My fortune, soberly? I must ha' my *Crochets*!
And my *Conundrums*! Well, go you, and seeke him:
His meaning may be truer, then my feare.
Bid him he, streight, come to me, to the *Court*;
Thether will I; and, if't be possible,
Un-screw my Advocate, upon new hopes:
When I provok'd him, then I lost my selfe.

ACT 5. SCENE 12.

AVOCATORI, &c.

These things can nére be reconcil'd. He, here,
Professeth, that the Gentleman was wrong'd,
And that the Gentlewoman was brought thether,
Forc'd by her husband: and there left.

VOLTORE.

Most true.

CELIA.

How ready is heav'n to those, that pray.

AVOCATORE 1.

But that

THE FOXE

Volpone would have ravish'd her, he holds
Utterly false ; knowing his impotence.

CORVINO.

Grave *Fathers*, he is possest ; againe, I say,
Possest : nay, if there be *possession*, and
Obsession, he has both.

AVOCATORE 3.

Here comes our Officer.

VOLPONE.

The *Parasite* will streight be, here, grave *Fathers*.

AVOCATORE 4.

You might invent some other name, Sir varlet.

AVOCATORE 3.

Did not the *Notarie* meet him ?

VOLPONE.

Not, that I know.

AVOCATORE 4.

His comming will cleare all.

AVOCATORE 2.

Yet it is misty.

VOLTORE.

May't please your *Father-hoods*——

VOLPONE.

Sir, the *Parasite*

Will'd me to tell you, that his Maister lives ;
That you are still the man ; your hopes the same ;
And this was onely a iest——

VOLTORE.

How ?

VOLPONE.

Sir, to trie
If you were firme, and how you stood affected.

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

Art 'sure he lives ?

VOLPONE.

Do I live, Sir ?

VOLTORE.

O me !

I was too violent.

VOLPONE.

Sir, you may redeeme it,
They said, you were possest ; fall downe, and seeme so :
Ile helpe to make it good. God blesse the man !
Stop your 'wind hard, and swell : See, see, see, see !
He vomits crooked pinnes ! his eyes are set,
Like a dead hares, hung in a poulters shop !
His mouth's running away ! Do you see, Signior ?
Now 'tis in his belly !

CORVINO.

I, the Devill !

VOLPONE.

Now, in his throate.

CORVINO.

I, I perceive it plaine.

VOLTORE.

'Twill out, 'twill out ; stand cleere. See, where it flyes !
In shape of a blew toad, with a battes wings !
Do you not see it, Sir ?

CORBACCIO.

What ? I thinke I doe.

CORVINO.

'Tis too manifest.

VOLPONE.

Looke ! he comes t'himselfe !

THE FOXE

VOLTORE.

Where am I?

VOLPONE.

Take good heart, the worst is past, Sir.

You are dis-possess.

AVOCATORE 1.

What accident is this?

AVOCATORE 2.

Sodaine, and full of wonder!

AVOCATORE 3.

If hee were

Possest, as it appeares, all this is nothing.

CORVINO.

He has beene often, subiect to these fitts.

AVOCATORE 1.

Shew him that writing, do you know it, Sir?

VOLPONE.

Deny it, Sir, forswear it, know it not.

VOLTORE.

Yes, I do know it well, it is my hand:

But all, that it containes, is false.

BONARIO.

O practise!

AVOCATORE 2.

What maze is this!

AVOCATORE 1.

Is hee not guilty, then,

Whome you, there, name the *Parasite*?

VOLTORE.

Grave *Fathers*,

No more then, his good Patron, old *Volpone*.

THE FOXE

AVOCATORE 4.

Why, hee is dead?

VOLTORE.

O no, my honor'd *Fathers*,

Hee lives——

AVOCATORE 1.

How! lives?

VOLTORE.

Lives.

AVOCATORE 2.

This is subtler, yet!

AVOCATORE 3.

You sayd, hee was dead.

VOLTORE.

Never.

AVOCATORE 3.

You sayd so?

CORVINO.

I heard so.

AVOCATORE 4.

Here comes the Gentleman; make him way.

AVOCATORE 3.

A stoolè.

AVOCATORE 4.

A proper man! and, were *Volpone* dead,

A fit match for my daughter.

AVOCATORE 3.

Give him way.

VOLPONE.

Mosca, I was almost lost, the Advocate

Had betrayd all; but, now, it is recover'd:

Al's on the henge againe——Say, I am living.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

What busie knave is this. Most reverend *Fathers*,
I, sooner, had attended your grave pleasures,
But that my order, for the funerall
Of my deare Patron did require mee——

VOLPONE.

(*Mosca !*)

MOSCA.

Whome I intend to bury, like a Gentleman——

VOLPONE.

I, quick, and cosen me of all.

AVOCATORE 2.

Still stranger ! More intricate !

AVOCATORE 1.

And come about, againe !

It is a match, my daughter is bestow'd.

MOSCA.

(Will you gi' mee halfe?)

VOLPONE.

First, Ile bee hang'd.

MOSCA.

I know,

Your voice is good, cry not so low'd.

AVOCATORE 1.

Demand

The Advocate. Sir, did not you affirme

Volpone was alive ?

VOLPONE.

Yes, and he is ;

This Gent'man told me, so. (Thou shalt have halfe.)

MOSCA.

Whose drunkard is this same ? speake some, that knowe him :

THE FOXE

I never saw his face : (I cannot now
Afford it you so cheape.

VOLPONE.

No ?)

AVOCATORE 1.

What say you ?

VOLTORE.

The Officer told mee.

VOLPONE.

I did, grave *Fathers*,
And will maintayne, he lives, with mine owne life,
And that this creature told me. (I was borne,
With all good starres my enemies.)

MOSCA.

Most grave *Fathers*,
If such an insolence, as this, must passe
Upon me, I am silent : 'Twas not this,
For which you sent, I hope.

AVOCATORE 2.

Take him away.

VOLPONE.

(*Mosca.*)

AVOCATORE 3.

Let him be whipt.

VOLPONE.

(Wilt thou betray mee ?
Cosen me ?)

AVOCATORE 3.

And taught, to beare himselfe
Toward a person of his ranke.

AVOCATORE 4.

Away.

THE FOXE

MOSCA.

I humbly thanke your *Father-hoods*.

VOLPONE.

Soft, soft : Whipt ?

And loose all that I have ? If I confesse,

It cannot bee much more.

AVOCATORE 4.

Sir, are you married ?

VOLPONE.

They'll bee ally'd anone ; I must be resolute :

The Foxe shall, here, uncase.

MOSCA.

(Patron.)

VOLPONE.

Nay, now,

My ruines shall not come alone ; your match

Ile hinder sure : my substance shall not glew you,

Nor screw you, into a Family.

MOSCA.

(Why, Patron !)

VOLPONE.

I am *Volpone*, and this is my Knave ;

This, his owne Knave ; This, avrices Foole ;

This, a *Chimera* of Wittall, Foole, and Knave ;

And, reverend *Fathers*, since we all can hope.

Nought, but a sentence, let's not now dispaire it.

You heare me breife.

CORVINO.

May it please your *Father-hoods*——

COMMANDADORI.

Silence.

THE FOXE

AVOCATORE 1.

The knot is now undone, by miracle!

AVOCATORE 2.

Nothing can be more cleare.

AVOCATORE 3.

Or, can more prove

These innocent.

AVOCATORE 1.

Give 'hem their liberty.

BONARIO.

Heaven could not, long, let such grosse crimes be hid.

AVOCATORE 2.

If this be held the high way, to get riches,

May I be poore.

AVOCATORE 3.

This's not the gaine, but torment.

AVOCATORE 1.

These possesse wealth, as sick men possesse *Fewers*,

Which, trulyer, may be said to possesse them.

AVOCATORE 2.

Disrobe that *Parasite*.

CORVINO. MOSCA.

Most honor'd *Fathers*——

AVOCATORE 1.

Can you plead aught to stay the course of Iustice?

If you can, speake.

CORVINO. VOLTORE.

We beg favor,

CELIA.

And mercy.

THE FOXE

AVOCATORE 1.

You hurt your innocence, suing for the guilty.
Stand forth ; and, first, the *Parasite*. You appeare
T' have beene the chieftest minister, if not plotter,
In all these leud impostures ; and now, lastly,
Have, with your impudence, abus'd the *Court*,
And habite of a Gentleman of *Venice*,
Being a fellow of no birth, or blood :
For which, our sentence is, first, thou be whipt ;
Then live perpetuall prisoner in our *Gallies*.

VOLTORE.

I thanke you, for him,

MOSCA.

Bane to thy wolfish nature !

AVOCATORE 1.

Deliver him to the *Saffi*. Thou, *Volpone*,
By blood, and ranke a Gentleman, canst not fall
Under like censure ; But our iudgement on thee
Is, that thy substance all be straight confiscate
To the *Hospitall*, of the *Incurabili* :
And, since the most was gotten by imposture,
By fayning *lame*, *gout*, *palsey*, and such diseases,
Thou art to lie in prison, crampt with irons,
'Till thou bee'st sick, and lame indeed. Remove him.

VOLPONE.

This is called mortifying of a *Foxe*.

AVOCATORE 1.

Thou *Voltore*, to take away the scandale
Thou hast giv'n all worthy men, of thy profession,
Art banish'd from their *Fellowship*, and our *State*.
Corbaccio, bring him neare. We here possesse
Thy sonne of all thy' estate ; and confine thee

THE FOXE

To the *Monastery of San' Spirito* :
Where, since thou knew'st not how to live well here,
Thou shalt be learn'd to die well.

CORBACCIO.

Ha ! what said he ?

COMMANDADORE.

You shall know anone, Sir.

AVOCATORE 1.

Thou *Corvino*, shalt
Be straight imbarqu'd from thine owne house, and row'd
Round about *Venice*, through the *grand Canale*,
Wearing a cap, with fayre, long Asses eares,
Instead of hornes : and so, to mount (a paper
Pin'd on thy brest) to the *Berlino*.

CORVINO.

Yes,
And, have mine eyes beat out with stinking fish,
Brus'd fruit, and rotten egges. 'Tis well. I 'am glad,
I shall not see my shame, yet.

AVOCATORE 1.

And to expiate
Thy wrongs done to thy wife, thou art to send her
Home, to her father, with her dowrie trebled :
And these are all your Iudgments.

ALL.

(Honour'd *Fathers*.)

AVOCATORE 1.

Which may not be revok'd. Now, you begin
When crimes are done, and past, and to be punish'd,
To thinke what your crimes are ; away, with them.
Let all, that see these vices thus rewarded,
Take heart, and love to study 'hem. Mischiefes feed
Like beasts, till they bee fat, and then they bleed.

THE FOXE

VOLPONE.

The seasoning of a *Play* is the applause,
Now, though the *Foxe* be punish'd by the lawes,
He, yet, doth hope there is no suffering due,
For any fact, which he hath done 'gainst you ;
If there be, censure him : here he, doubtfull, stands.
If not, fare *Iovially*, and clap your hands.

THE END

